
NOVEMBER 1914
PRICE 15 CENTS
THE
RED BOOK
MAGAZINE
A new "David Harum"
the brother of the man who wrote the original
Empty Pockets" the new
PERT HUGHES novel of New York
Back to Baltimore" the best story
ING W. LARDNER has written so far
fourteen other big features in this numb
HENRY • H



"ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES."

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NOVEMBER RED BOOK MAGAZINE

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PHOTOGRAPHIC ART STUDIES
Beautiful Women of the Stage

THREE NOVELS IN SERIAL FORM

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The beginning of a new "David Harum" by the brother of the man who wrote the original. *Illustrated by Frederick R. Gruger.*

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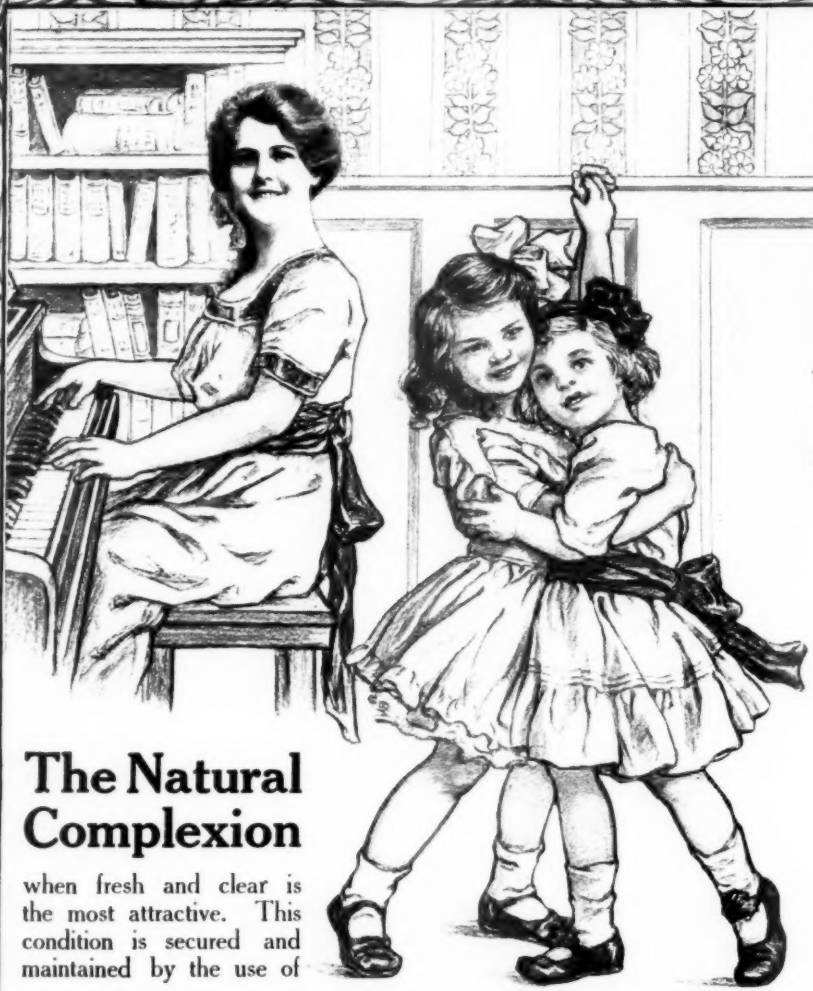
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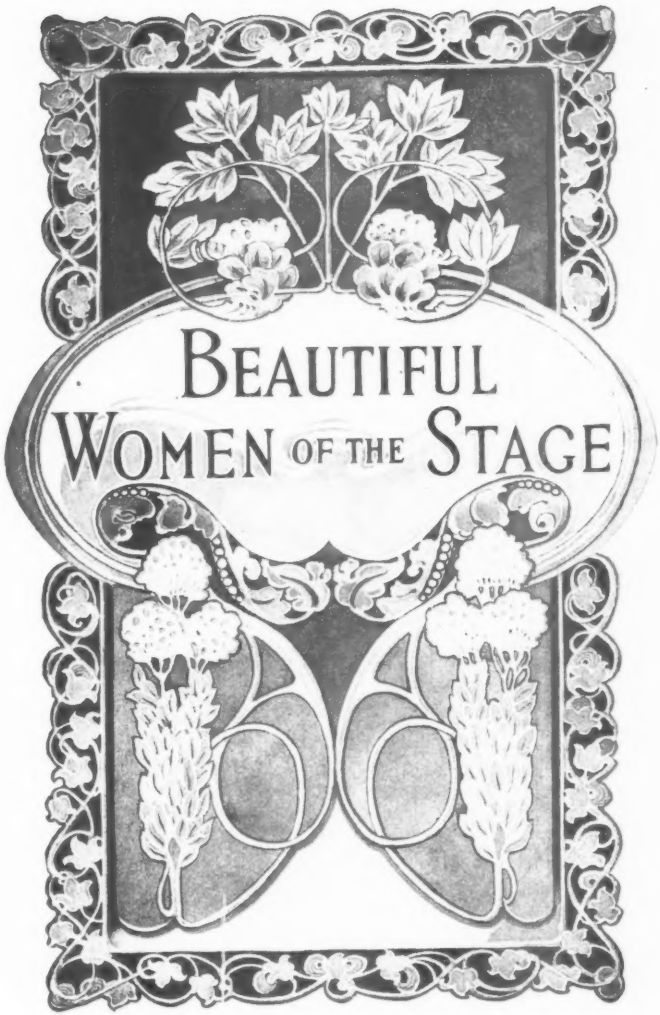
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ANNA LAUGHLIN
in Vaudeville
Photograph by Matzene, Chicago



FRITZI SCHEFF
in "The Pretty Mrs. Smith"
Photograph by Strauss-Peyton Studio, Kansas City, Mo.



AUDREY MAPLE
in Vaudeville



DOROTHY MORTIMER

Leading Stock Company Player

Photograph by Strauss-Peyton Studio, Kansas City, Mo.



RENE DETLING
in "Sari"
Photograph by White, New York



LOUISE MINK
in "The Firefly"
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Exponent of the Modern Dances

Photograph by Mishkin, New York



ANNA CLEVELAND
in Vaudeville
Photograph by E. C. Bitzer, New York



SYDNEY SHIELDS
in Vaudeville
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EVA LANG

to appear in new musical play

Photograph by Strauss-Peyton Studio, Kansas City, Mo.



EVELYN WIEDLING
in "Bought and Paid For"
Photograph by Strauss Peyton Studio, Kansas City, Mo.



MAY ALLISON
in "Apartment 12-K"
Photograph by Sarony, New York



So, she thought, had the lights of her life been extinguished—one by one.

From — "The Last Dinner," an unusual short story by Frances Peck Smith, which begins on page 188.

November 1914

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XXIV
No 1

RAY LONG, Editor



Meredith Nicholson

Another Brilliant Story by Meredith Nicholson

The author of "The House of a Thousand Candles" has written "Broken Glass" for the leading feature of the December Red Book Magazine. It's a quick-action story of a wreck, a house-party, a man with a mania, a girl who understands the magic of love—all the elements which Mr. Nicholson understands how to use with the grace and charm which make his short stories the most prized of any that are being written. "Broken Glass" will be printed complete in the December issue.

THESE PACE-SETTING WRITERS WILL ALL BE IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE

Rupert Hughes
Clifford S. Raymond
Justin Huntly McCarthy
Berthe Knatvold Mellett
John Fleming Wilson
Frank N. Westcott
Albert Payson Terhune
James Oliver Curwood
Ellis Parker Butler

AND THE BEST CHRISTMAS STORY YOU EVER READ

It's a story of a delivery wagon's cruise on Christmas eve. Harris Merton Lyon, author of the famous "The Two Thousandth Christmas," wrote it, and he filled it chock full of the Christmas spirit—though it seems at times to have a reverse English.

THE RED BOOK IS SETTING THE PACE IN THE MAGAZINE WORLD

A new "David Harum" by the brother of the man who wrote the original

HEPSEY

By Frank N. Westcott

THE noisy, loose-jointed train pulled out of the station, leaving behind it a solitary young man, enveloped in smoke and cinders. In the middle of the platform stood a little building with a curb roof, pointed at both ends like a Noah's Ark; and the visitor felt that if he could only manage to lift up one side of the roof he would find the animals "two by two," together with the cylindrical Noah and the rest of his family. There was no one in sight but the station-master, who called out from the ticket office:

"Did you want to go to the village? The 'bus wont be down till the next train: but maybe you can ride up on the ice wagon."

"Thanks," the stranger replied. "I think I'll wait for the 'bus, if it's not too long."

"Twenty minutes or so, if Sam don't have to collect the passengers goin' West, and wait for a lot o' women that forget their handbags and have to get out and go back after 'em."

The new arrival was good to look at—a handsome, well-built fellow of about twenty-five, dressed in a gray suit which was non-committal as to his profession, with a clean-shaven face which fore the unmistakable stamp of good breeding and unlimited good nature. He tilted his suit-case on end and sat down on it; then he filled his briar pipe, crossed his legs, and looked about to take stock of the situation. He gazed about curiously; but there was nothing of any special interest in sight, except, painfully conspicuous on the face of a grass terrace,



"Oh, Papa, I did not see that you were

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BURKE

If you liked kindly, witty old David Harum, you'll love Hepsey Burke

Illustrated by Frederick R. Gruger



busy with a client. Do excuse me."

the name of the village picked out in large letters composed of oyster-shells and the bottoms of protruding beer bottles stuck in the ground. The stranger found himself wondering where a sufficient number of bottles could be found to complete such an elaborate pattern. The only other marked feature of the landscape in the way of artistic decoration was the corrugated base of an old stove, painted white, which served as a flower vase. From this grew a huge bunch of scarlet geraniums, staring defiantly, and seeming fairly to sizzle in the hot, vibrant atmosphere, which was as still as the calm of a moon-lit night.

As the man on the suit-case gazed about him at the general air of dilapidation and neglect characteristic of a country town on the down grade, and recalled the congenial life of the city which he had left, with all its busy competition, with all its absorbing activities, the companionship of the men he loved, and the restful, inspiring intimacy with a certain young woman, he felt, for the moment, a pang of homesickness. If the station were a sample of the village itself, then life in such a place must be deadening to every finer sensibility and ambition; it must throw a man back on himself and make him morbid.

The momentary depression was relieved by the station-master, who suddenly appeared at the door of the Ark and called out:

"Here comes Hepsey Burke. Maybe she'll take you up; that'll be a dum

sight more comfortable than Lipkin's 'bus."

There was nothing to be seen but a cloud of dust, advancing with the rapidity of a whirlwind along the highway, from which there gradually emerged a team and a "democrat," containing a woman, a boy about fourteen, and a middle-aged man.

As the turn-out drew up, the man took the reins from Mrs. Burke, who jumped out of the wagon with remarkable agility for one of her size and years, and, nodding to the station-master, came on to the platform.

HEPSEY BURKE was rather stout; and the lines from her nose to the corners of her mouth, and the wisps of gray hair which had blown about her face, indicated that she had passed the meridian of life. At first glance there was nothing striking about her appearance; but there was a subtle expression about the mouth, a twinkle about the large gray eyes behind the glasses she wore, that indicated a sense of humor which had probably been a God-send to her. She was strong and well, and carried with her an air of indomitable conviction that things worked themselves out all right in the long run.

The boy was obviously her son, and in spite of his overalls and frayed straw hat, he was a handsome little chap. He looked at you shyly from under a crop of curly hair, with half closed eyes, giving you the impression that you were being "sized up" by a very discriminating individual; and when he smiled, as he did frequently, he revealed a set of very white and perfect teeth. When he was silent, there was a little lifting of the inner brow which gave him a thoughtful look quite beyond his years; and you were sadly mistaken if you imagined that you could form a correct impression of Nicholas Burke at the first interview.

The man wore a sandy beard, but no mustache, and had a downcast, meekly submissive air, probably the depressing effect of many years of severe domestic discipline.

Mrs. Burke was evidently surprised to find no one there but the man on the suit-case; but as he rose and lifted his hat, she hesitated a moment, exclaiming:

"I beg pardon, but I was lookin' for a parson who was to arrive on this train. You haven't seen anything that looked like a parson, have you? You can generally spot' em every time."

The young man smiled:

"Well, no; I seem to be the only passenger who got off the train; and though I'm a clergyman, you don't seem to find it easy to 'spot' me."

Mrs. Burke, with a characteristic gesture, pulled her glasses forward with a jerk and settled them firmly back again on the bridge of her nose. She surveyed the speaker critically as she questioned:

"But you don't seem to show the usual symptoms—collar buttoned behind, and all that."

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Madam, but I never travel in clerical uniform. Can't afford it."

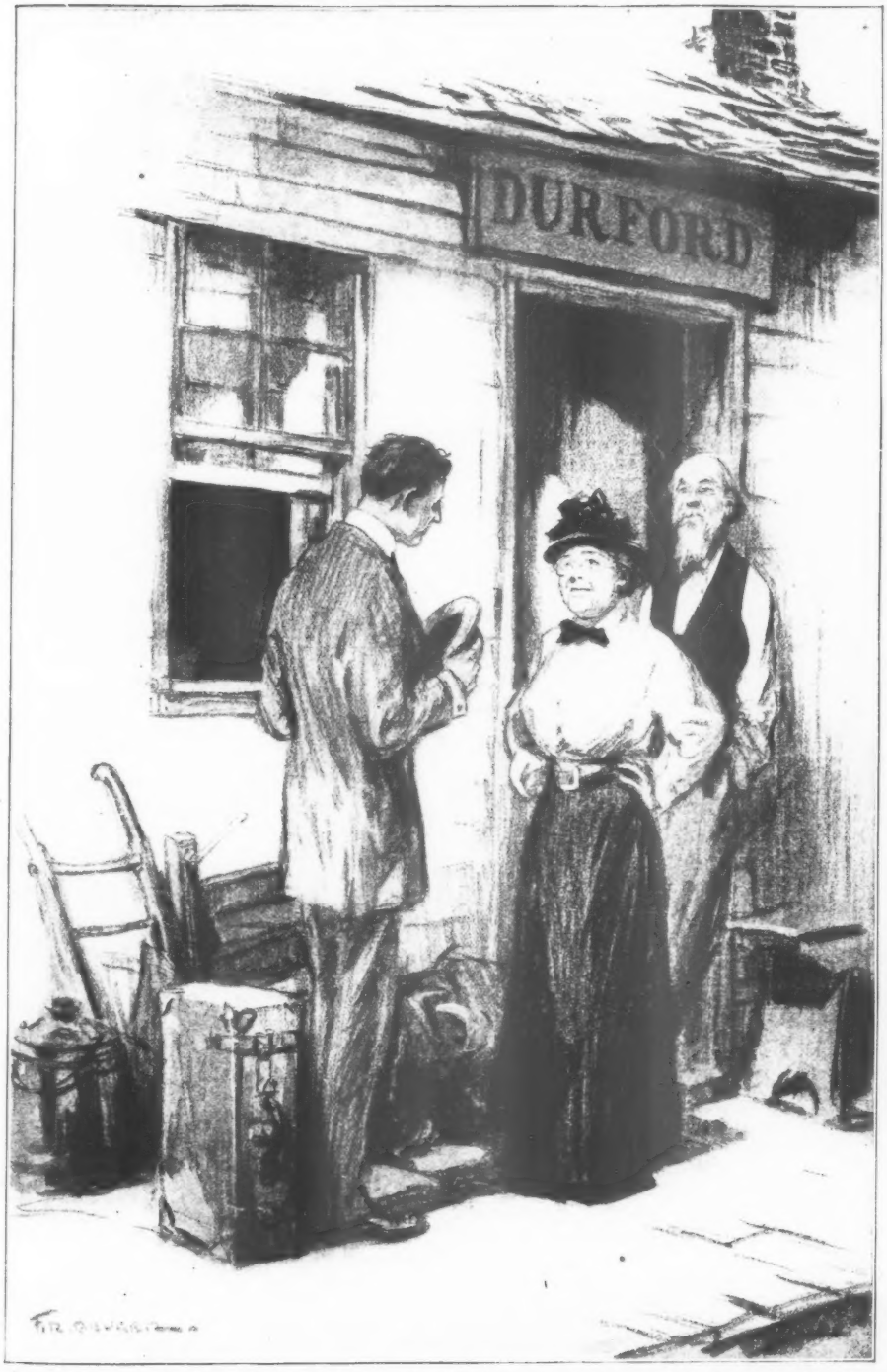
"Well, you've got more sense than most parsons, if I may say so. Maybe you're the one I'm lookin' for: Mr. Donald Maxwell."

"That is my name, and I am sure you must be Mrs. Burke."

"Sure thing!"—shaking his outstretched hand heartily. "Now you come right along with me, Mr. Maxwell, and get into the democrat and make yourself comfortable." They walked round to the front of the station. "This, Mr. Maxwell, is Jonathan Jackson, the Junior Warden; and this is my son Nicholas, generally known as Nickey, except when I am about to spank him. Say, Jonathan, you just h'ist that trunk into the back of the wagon, and Nickey, you take the parson's suit-case."

The Junior Warden grinned good naturedly as he shook hands with the new arrival. But Hepsey continued briskly: "Now, Jonathan, you get into the back seat with Nickey, and Mr. Maxwell, you sit with me on the front seat so that I can talk to you. Jonathan means well, but his talk 's limited to crops and symptoms, even if he is an old friend, my next door neighbor, and the Junior Warden."

Jonathan obeyed orders; and, as he got into the wagon, winked at Maxwell and remarked:



Mrs. Burke was evidently surprised to find no one there but the man on the suit-case; but as he rose and lifted his hat, she hesitated a moment, exclaiming: "I beg pardon, but I was lookin' for a parson who was to arrive on this train. You haven't seen anything that looked like a parson, have you? You can generally spot 'em every time."

"You see we have to take a back seat when Hepsey drives; and we have to hold on with both hands. She's a pacer."

"Don't you let him frighten you, Mr. Maxwell," Hepsey replied. "Jonathan would probably hold on with both hands if he lay flat on his back in a ten-acre lot. He's just that fearless and enterprisin'."

Then, starting the horses with a cluck, she turned to Maxwell and continued:

"I guess I didn't tell you I was glad to see you; but I am. I got your note tellin' me when you were comin', but I didn't get down to the station in time, as the men are killin' hogs to-day, and until I get the in'ards off my hands, I haven't time for anything."

"I am sorry to have put you to the trouble of coming at all. I'm sure it's very good of you."

"No trouble; not the least. I generally look after the visitin' parsons, and I'm quite used to it. You can get used to 'most anything."

Maxwell laughed as he responded:

"You speak as if it weren't always a pleasure, Mrs. Burke."

"Well, I must admit that there are parsons and parsons. They are pretty much of a lottery, and it is generally my luck to draw blanks. But don't you worry about that; you don't look a bit like a parson."

"I think that's a rather doubtful compliment."

"Oh, well, you know what I mean. There are three kinds of people in the world; men, women, and parsons; and I like a parson who is a man first, and a parson afterwards; not one who is a parson first, and a man two weeks Tuesday come Michaelmas."

Donald laughed: he felt sure he was going to make friends with this shrewd yet open-hearted member of his flock. The pace slackened as the road began a steep ascent. Mrs. Burke let the horses walk up the hill, the slackened reins held in one hand; in the other lolled the whip, which now and then she raised, tightening her grasp upon it as if for use, on second thoughts dropping it to idleness again and clucking to the horses instead. It was typical of her character—the means of chastisement held handy, but in reserve, and usually displaced by other methods of suasion.

As they turned down over the brow of the hill they drove rapidly, and as the splendid landscape of rolling country, tilled fields and pasture, stretching on to distant wooded mountains, spread out before him, Maxwell exclaimed enthusiastically, drawing in a deep breath of the exhilarating air:

"How beautiful it is up here! You must have a delightful climate."

"Well," she replied, "I don't know as we have much climate to speak of. We have just a job lot of weather, and we take it regular—once after each meal, once before goin' to bed, and repeat if necessary before mornin'. I wont say but it's pretty good medicine, at that. There'd be no show for the doctor, if it wasn't fashionable to invite him in at the beginnin' and the end of things."

Jonathan, who up to this time had been silent, felt it incumbent to break into the conversation a bit, and interposed:

"I suppose you 've never been up in these parts before?"

"No," Maxwell responded; "but I've always intended to come up during the season for a little hunting, some time. Was there much sport last year?"

"Well, I can't say as there was, and I can't say *as* there wasn't. The most I recollect was that two city fellers shot a guide and another feller. But then it was a poor season last fall, anyway."

MAXWELL gave the Junior Warden a quick look, but there was not a trace of a smile on his face, and Hepsey chuckled. Keeping her eyes on the horses as they trotted along at a smart pace over a road none too smooth for comfortable riding, she remarked casually:

"I suppose the Bishop told you what we wanted in the shape of a parson, didn't he?"

"Well, he hinted a few things."

"Yes; we're awful modest, like most country parishes that don't pay their rector more than enough to get his collars laundered. We want a man who can preach like the Archbishop of Canterbury, and call on everybody twice a

week, and know just when anyone is sick without bein' told a word about it. He's got to be an awful good mixer, to draw the young people like a porous plaster, and fill the pews. He must have lots of sociables, and fairs, and things to take the place of religion; and he must dress well, and live like a gentleman on the salary of a book-agent. But if he brings city ways along with him and makes us feel like hayseeds, he wont be popular."

"That's a rather large contract!" Maxwell replied with a smile.

"Yes, but think what we're goin' to pay you: six hundred dollars a year, and you'll have to raise most of it yourself, just for the fun of it."

At this point the Junior Warden interrupted:

"Now, Hepsey, what's the use of upsettin' the young man at the start. He's—"

"Never mind, Jonathan. I'm tellin' the truth, anyway. You see," she continued, "most people think piety's at a low ebb unless we're gettin' up some kind of a holy show all the time, to bring people together that wouldn't meet anywhere else if they saw each other first. Then when they've bought a chance on a pieced bed-quilt, or paid for chicken-pie at a church supper, they go home feelin' real religious, believin' that if there's any obligation between them and heaven, it isn't on their side, anyway. Do you think you're goin' to fill the bill, Mr. Maxwell?"

"Well, I don't know," said Maxwell. "Of course I might find myself possessed of a talent for inventing new and original entertainments each week; but I'm afraid that you're a bit pessimistic, Mrs. Burke, aren't you?"

"No, I'm not. There's a mighty fine side to life in a country parish sometimes, where the right sort of a man is in charge. The people take him as one of their family, you know, and borrow eggs of his wife as easy as of their next door neighbor. But the young reverends expect too much of a country parish, and break their hearts sometimes because they can't make us tough old critters all over while you wait. Poor things! I'm sorry for the average country parson, and a lot sorrier for his wife."

"Well, don't you worry about me: I'm well and strong, and equal to anything, I imagine. I don't believe in taking life too seriously; it's bad for the nerves and digestion. It will be an entirely new experience for me, and I'm sure I shall find the people interesting."

"Yes, but what if they aren't your kind? I suppose you might find hippopotamuses interestin' for a while, but that's no reason you should like to live with 'em. Anyway, don't mind what people say. They aint got nothin' to think about, so they make up by talkin' about it, especially when it happens to be a new parson. We've been havin' odds and ends of parsons from the remnant counter now for six months or more; and that's enough to kill any parish. I believe that if the angel Gabriel should preach for us, half the congregation would object to the cut of his wings, and the other half to the fit of his halo. We call for all the virtues of heaven, and expect to get 'em for seven-forty-nine."

"Well—I shall have to look to you and the Wardens to help me out," he said. "You must help me run things, until I know the ropes."

"Oh! Bascom will run things for you, if you let him do the runnin'," she replied, cracking her whip. "You'll need to get popular first with him and his—then you'll have it easy."

Maxwell pondered these local words of wisdom, and recalled the Bishop's warning that Bascom, the Senior Warden, had not made life easy for his predecessors, and his superior's exhortation to firmness and tact, to the end that he, Maxwell, should hold his own, while taking his Senior Warden along with him. The Senior Warden was evidently a power in the land.

THEY had driven about a mile and a half when the wagon turned off the road, and drew up by a house standing some distance back from it; getting down, Mrs. Burke exclaimed:

"Welcome to Thunder Cliff, Mr. Maxwell. Thunder Cliff's the name of the place, you know. All the summer visitors in Durford have names for their

houses; so I thought I'd call my place Thunder Cliff, just to be in the style."

Jonathan Jackson, who had kept a discreet silence during Hepsey's pointers concerning his colleague, the Senior Warden, interjected:

"There aint no cliff, Hepsey, and you know it. I always tell her, Mr. Maxwell, 'taint appropriate a bit."

"Jonathan, you aint no Englishman, and there's no use pretendin' that you are. Some day when I have a couple of hours to myself, I'll explain the whole matter to you. There isn't any cliff, and the house wants paintin' and looks like thunder. Isn't that reason enough to go on with? Now, Mr. Maxwell, you come in and make yourself perfectly at home."

CHAPTER II

Gossip

THAT afternoon Maxwell occupied himself in unpacking his trunks and arranging his room. As the finishing touch, he drew out of a leather case an exquisite miniature of a beautiful girl, which he placed on the mantelpiece, and at which he gazed for a long time with a wistful light in his fine gray eyes. Then he threw himself on the lounge, and pulling a letter from his inner pocket, read:

> Don't worry about expenses, dear. Six hundred is quite enough for two; we shall be passing rich! You must remember that, although I am a "college girl," I am not a helpless, extravagant creature, and I know how to economize. I am sure we shall be able to make both ends meet. With a small house, rent free, a bit of ground for a vegetable garden, and plenty of fresh air, we can accomplish almost anything, and be supremely happy together. And then, when you win advancement, as of course you will very soon, we shall appreciate the comforts all the more from the fact that we were obliged to live the simple life for a while.
>
> You can't possibly imagine how I miss you, sweetheart. Do write as soon as possible and tell me all about Durford. If I could just have one glimpse of you in your new quarters—but that would only be a wretched aggravation; so I keep saying to myself "Some day, some day," and try to be patient. God bless you and good-by.

Donald folded the letter carefully, kissed it, and tucked it away in his pocket. Clasping his hands behind his head, he gazed at the ceiling.

"I wonder if I'd better tell Mrs. Burke about Betty. I don't care to pass myself off as a free man in a parish like this. And yet, after all, it's none of their business at present. I think I'd better wait and find out if there's any possibility of making her happy here."

There was a knock at the door.

"Talk of angels," murmured Maxwell, and hurriedly returned the miniature to its case before opening the door to Mrs. Burke, who came to offer assistance.

"Don't bother to fuss for me," she said as he hastened to remove some books and clothes from a chair, so that she might sit down. "I only came up for a moment to see if there was anything I could do. Think you can make yourself pretty comfortable here? I call this room 'the prophet's chamber,' you know, because it's where I always put the visitin' parsons."

"They're lucky," he replied. "This room is just delightful with that jolly old fireplace, its big dormer windows, and the view over the river and the hills beyond: I shall be very comfortable."

"Well, I hope so. You know I don't think any livin'-room is complete without a fireplace. Next to an old friend, a bright wood fire's the best thing I know to keep one from getting lonesome."

"Yes—that and a good cigar."

"Well, I haven't smoked in some time now," Mrs. Burke replied, smiling, "so I can't say. What a lot of things you've got!"

"Yes, more than I thought I had."

"I do love to see a man tryin' to put things to rights. He never knows where anything belongs. What an awful lot of books you've got! I suppose you're just chuck full of learnin', clean up to your back teeth; but we wont any of us know the difference. Most city parsons preach about things that are ten miles over the heads of us country people. You can't imagine how little thinkin' most of us do up here. We're more troubled with potato bugs than we are with doubts; and you'll have to learn a

lot about us before you really get down to business, I guess."

"Yes, I expect to learn more from you than you will from me. That's one of the reasons why I wanted to come so far out in the country."

"Hm! I hope you wont be disappointed."

Mrs. Burke adjusted her glasses and gazed interestedly about the room at some pictures and decorations which Maxwell had placed in position, and inquired:

"Who is the plaster lady and gentleman standin' on the mantel-piece?"

"The Venus de Milo, and the Hermes of Praxiteles."

"Well, you know, I just can't help preferrin' ladies and gentlemen with arms and legs, myself. I suppose it's real cultivated to learn to like parts of people done in marble. Maybe when I go down to the city next fall to buy my trousseau, I'll buy a few plasters myself, to make the house look more cheerful-like."

MAXWELL caught at the word "trousseau," and as Mrs. Burke had spoken quite seriously he asked:

"Are you going to be married, Mrs. Burke?"

"No such thing! But when a handsome young widow like me lives alone, frisky and sixty-ish, with six lonesome, awkward widowers in the same school district, you can never tell what might happen any minute; 'In time of peace prepare for war,' as the paper says."

Maxwell laughed reassuringly.

"I don't see why you laugh," Mrs. Burke responded, chuckling to herself. "'Taint polite to look surprised when a woman says she's a-goin' to get married. Every woman under ninety-eight has expectations. While there's life there's hope that some man will make a fool of himself. But unless I miss my guess, you don't catch me surrenderin' my independence. As long as I have enough to eat and am well, I'm contented."

"You certainly look the picture of health, Mrs. Burke."

"Oh yes! as well as could be expected, when I'm just recoverin' from a visit from Mary Sam."

"What sort of a visitor is that?" asked Maxwell, laughing.

"Mary Sam's my sister-in-law. She spends a month with me every year on her own invitation. She is what you'd call a hardy annual. She is the most stingy and narrow-minded woman I ever saw. The bark on the trees hangs in double box-plaits as compared with Mary Sam. But I got the best of her last year. While I was cleanin' the attic I came across the red pasteboard sign with 'Scarlet Fever' painted on it, that the Board of Health put on the house when Nickey had the fever three years ago. The very next day I was watchin' the 'bus comin' up Main Street, when I saw Mary Sam's solferino bonnet bobbin' up and down inside. Before she got to the house, I sneaked out and pinned up the sign, right by the front door. She got onto the piazza, bag, baggage, and brown paper bundles, before she caught sight of it. Then I wish you could have seen her face: I wouldn't have believed so much could be done with so few features."

"She didn't linger long?" laughed the parson, who continued arranging his books while his visitor chatted.

"Linger? Well, not exactly. She turned tail and run lickety-spindle back for the 'bus as if she had caught sight of a subscription paper for foreign missions. I heard Jim Anderson, who drives the 'bus, snicker as he helped her in again; but he didn't give me away. Jim and I are good friends. But when she got home she wrote to Sally Ramsdale to ask how Nickey was; and Sally, not bein' on to the game, wrote back that there was nothin' the matter with Nickey that she knew of. Then Mary Sam wrote me the impudentest letter I ever got; and she came right back, and stayed two months instead of one, just to be mean. But that sign's done good service since. I've scared off agents and tramps by the score. I always hang it in the parlor window when I'm away from home."

"But suppose your house caught fire while you were away?"

"Well, I've thought of that; but there's worse things than fire if your insurance is all right."

Mrs. Burke relapsed into silence for a while, until Maxwell opened a box of embroidered stoles, which he spread out on the bed for her inspection.

"My! but aren't those beautiful! I never saw the like before. Where did you get 'em?"

"They were made by the 'Sisters of St. Paul' in Boston."

Hepsey gazed at the stoles a long time in silence, handling them daintily; then she remarked:

"How much did these things cost, if you don't mind my askin'?"

"I don't know. They were given to me by a friend of mine, when I graduated from the Seminary."

"Hm! a friend of yours, eh? She must think an awful lot of you."

Hepsey gave Donald a sharp glance.

"I didn't say it was a lady."

"No, but your eyes and cheeks did. Well, it's none of my business, and there's no reason that I know of why the Devil should have all the bright colors, and embroideries, and things. Are you High Church?"

Maxwell hesitated a moment and replied:

"What do you mean by 'High Church?'"

"The last rector we had was awful high." Hepsey smiled with reminiscent amusement.

"How so?"

"We suspected he didn't wear no pants durin' service."

"How very extraordinary! Is that a symptom of ritualism?"

"Well, you see he wore a cassock under his surplice, and none of our parsons had ever done that before. The Senior Warden got real stirred up about it, and told Mr. Whittimore that our rectors always wore pants durin' service. Mr. Whittimore pulled up his cassock and showed the Warden that he had his pants on. The Warden told him it was an awful relief to his mind, as he considered goin' without pants durin' service the enterin' wedge for Popish tricks; and if things went on like that, nobody knew where we would land. Then some of the women got talkin', and said that the rector practiced celibacy, and that some one should warn him that the parish wouldn't stand for any more innovations, and he'd better look out. So one day, Virginia Bascom, the Senior Warden's daughter, told him what was being said about him. The parson just laughed at Ginty, and said that celibacy was his misfortune, not his fault; and that he hoped to overcome it in time. That puzzled her some, and she came to me and asked what celibacy was. When I told her it was staying unmarried, like St. Paul—my, but wasn't she mad, though! You ought to have seen her face. She was so mortified that she wouldn't speak to me for a week. Well, I guess I've gossiped enough for now. I must go and make my biscuits for supper. If I can help you any, just call out."

CHAPTER III

The Senior Warden

"IT'S a fine morning, Mr. Maxwell," Mrs. Burke remarked at breakfast next day, "and I'm goin' to drive down to the village to do some shopping. Don't you want to go with me and pay your respects to the Senior Warden? You'll find him in his office. Then I'll meet you later, and bring you home — dead or alive!"

Maxwell laughed. "That sounds cheerful, but I should be glad to go."

"I guess you better, and have it over with. He'll expect it. He's like royalty: he never calls first; and when he's at home he always has a flag on a pole in the front yard. If he's out of town for the day, his man lowers the flag. I generally call when the flag's down. I wish everybody had a flag; it's mighty convenient."

The center of Durford's social, commercial and ecclesiastical life was the village green, a plot of ground on which the boys played ball, and in the middle of which was the liberty pole and the band-stand. On one side of the green was a long block of stores, and on the opposite side a row of churches, side by side, five in number. There was the Meeting House, in plain gray; "The First Church of Durford," with a Greek portico in front; "The Central Church," with a box-like tower and a slender



When they entered the parlor Mrs. Burke gazed about in a critical sort of way. "Jonathan Jackson, if you don't get married again before long I don't know what'll become of you," she remarked.

steeple with a gilded rooster perched on top—an edifice which looked like a cross between a skating rink and a railroad station; and last of all, the 'Piscopal Church on the corner—a small, elongated structure, which might have been a carpenter-shop but for the little cross which surmounted the front gable, and the pointed tops of the narrow windows, which were supposed to be "gothic" and to proclaim the structure to be the House of God.

Just around the corner was a little tumble-down house known as "The Rectory." The tall grass and the lowered shades indicated that it had been unoccupied for some time. Mrs. Burke called Maxwell's attention to it.

"I suppose you'll be living there some day — if you stay here long enough; though of course you can't keep house there alone. The place needs a lot of overhaulin'; but I guess we can fix it up when the time comes. That's your cathedral, on the corner. You see, we have five churches, when we really need only one; and so we have to scrap for each other's converts, to keep up the interest. We feed 'em on sandwiches, pickles and coffee every now and then, to make 'em come to church. Yes, preachin' and pickles, sandwiches and salvation, seem to run in the same class, these days."

When they arrived in front of the block, Mrs. Burke hitched her horse, and left Maxwell to his own devices. He proceeded to hunt up the post office; and as the mail was not yet distributed, he had to wait some time, conscious of the fact that he was the center of interest to the crowd assembled in the room. Finally, when he gained access to the delivery window, he was greeted by a smile from the postmistress, a woman of uncertain age, who remarked as she handed him his letters:

"Good morning, Mr. Maxwell. Glad to meet you. I'm a Presbyterian myself; but I have always made it a point to be nice to everybody. You seem to have quite a good many correspondents, and I presume you'll be wantin' a lock box. It's so convenient. You must feel lonesome in a strange place. Drop in and see Mother some day. She's got curvature of the spine, but no religious prejudices. She'll be right glad to see you, I'm sure, even though she's not 'Piscopal."

Maxwell thanked her, and inquired the way to the Senior Warden's office, to which she directed him.

Three doors below the post office was a hallway and a flight of stairs leading up to Mr. Bascom's sanctum. As he ascended, Maxwell bethought him of the Bishop's hint that this was the main stronghold for the exercise of his strategy. The Senior Warden, for some reason or other, had persistently quarreled with the clergy, or crossed them. What was the secret of his antagonism? Would he be predisposed in Maxwell's favor, or prejudiced against him? He would soon discover — and he decided to let Bascom do most of the talking. Reaching the first landing, Donald knocked on a door the upper panel of which was filled with glass, painted white. On the glass in large black letters was the name "SYLVESTER BASCOM."

THE Senior Warden sat behind a table, covered with musty books and a litter of letters and papers. In his prime he had been a small man; and now, well past middle age, he looked as if he had shrunk until he was at least five sizes too small for his skin, which was sallow and loose. There was a suspicious look in his deep-set eyes, which made his hooked nose all the more aggressive. He was bald, except for a few stray locks of gray hair which were brushed up from his ears over the top of his head, and evidently fastened down by some gluey cosmetic. He frowned severely as Maxwell entered, but extended a shriveled, bony hand, and pointed to a chair. Then, placing the tips of his fingers together in front of his chest, he gazed at Donald as if he were the prisoner at the bar, and began without any preliminary welcome:

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Back to Baltimore

By Ring W. Lardner

WE think Ring Lardner, who has made folks all over the country laugh with his "Letters of a Bush Leaguer," is just about the keenest writer in the United States. Mr. Lardner knows baseball from A to Z. And in "Back to Baltimore," his first Red Book story, he has combined it with a bigger subject: Woman.

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SAYRE GROESBECK

WELL, boys, I'm goin' right through to Pittsburgh with you if you don't mind, and I aint been traded to your bunch nor the Pirates neither. It'll be in all the papers to-night or to-morrow mornin', so they aint no use o' me keepin' it a secret. I've jumped to the Baltimore Feds, and whether Knabe is figurin' on usin' me regular or settin' me on the bench or givin' me a job washin' undershirts, I don't know or I don't givadam. I couldn't be no worse off than I was up there.

Managin' a club may be all O. K. if the directors is all bachelors and has all o' them tooken a oath not to never get married. But when a man's got a wife, they aint no tellin' when he's goin' to die, and when he dies and she gets a hold o' the ball club, *good night*. If they ever is a skirt elected President o' the United States, I'll move to Paris or Europe or somewheres, if I have to walk.

As for this here Mrs. Hayes, the dope about her lettin' the directors run the club was all bunk. She's been the boss ever since the old bird croaked, or else I'd of stuck there and finished higher with that gang than they finished since Frank Selee had 'em.

Well, sir, I'm canned out of a managin' job, and I'm through with the big league, I guess, and I'm goin' back where I started in at—Baltimore. But you don't need to waste no sympathy on me. I'm gettin' as much dough as they give me up there, and they wont be no chancet o' me bein' drove crazy by a skirt. Them Baltimore people used to like me O. K. when Dunnie had me, and I guess I

aint did nothin' since to make 'em sore. I'll give 'em the best I got, and I'll let Knabe do all the worryin'. I'm off'n that stuff, and if any boob ever offers me another managin' job, I'll bean him with a crowbar or somethin'.

I bet you'll see in a few days where Mrs. Hayes gets through bein' a widow, and her next name's goin' to be Mrs. William Baker Junior. They aint no danger o' me forgettin' that name. The guy that owns it is a ball player, but the only thing alike about he and the Baker Connie Mack's got is that they both listen with their ears. You fellas didn't never get a look at this bird because he was so good that we didn't only play him in one game, and that was against the Philly club. If him and her does hook up, he wont need to play no more. With them runnin' the team together, they'll be enough comedy without him puttin' on a uniform any more.

YOU knowed Old Man Hayes, o' course. He was a good old scout, but he pulled a lot o' boners, one o' which was him marryin' this doll. She's a handsome devil all right; I'll slip her that much. But he should ought to of knew that he didn't cop her because she was a-stuck on him. She had it doped that he was about all in, and it wouldn't be long till the dough was all hern. His heart was bad, and they was two or three other things the matter with him, and havin' her round didn't make him no healthier. At that, he'd of croaked sooner or later without no female help.

He was sure nuts over his ball club, and it hurt him every time we lose a game. You can see where he was hurt pretty often last year. At that, Bill Fox was gettin' by all right with the managin' job, when you figure the bunch he had. But finishin' seventh didn't make no hit with the old man, even if we thought we done pretty well to stay in the league and not get arrested. Anyway, Bill got canned and the job was gave to me. If I hadn't 've needed the money pretty bad, I wouldn't never 've tooken it.

Them deals I made last winter helped us a whole lot, and when we got down South this spring, we wasn't a bad lookin' club, barrin' one or two positions. We was such a improvement over the old gang that the old man lost his needle and was countin' the world's serious receipts along in March. He kept a-askin' me who did I think would be in the race with us. If I had of told him the truth and says we couldn't win no pennant unless your bunch and the New York club was killed in a railroad wreck, he'd of canned me. So what was I to do but tell him we had a good fightin' chancet to cop, when we didn't have no more chancet than a rabbit or somethin'. I says the luck would have to be with us and if it was, we might surprise everybody. That luck stuff was to be my alibi when we landed where we belonged.

The season opened and we got away good. McGraw's pitchers was in no shape, and we skun 'em three out o' the first four. We broke even with Philly and give Brooklyn a good lickin'. We was right out in front along with you fellas. Then we struck a slump, and you guys and Philly both goes ahead of us. The old man called me in and ast me why didn't we stay in first place. I might of told him it was because we knowed we didn't have no business there. But I stalled and says I didn't want to have my club go too fast at first or they might maybe get tired out.

Then we come West in May, and the old boy come along with us. We opened up in Cincy and broke even with 'em, though they looked like the worst club in the world. The old man wasn't feelin' well, and a doctor told him he should ought to go home, but he says he would go to St. Louis with us. Higgins trimmed us four straight, and that finished the boss. He grabbed a train for home, but croaked on the way there.

It was gave out in the papers that young Mrs. Hayes would be president o' the club, but I didn't take no stock in that till we come in off'n the road. I was like everybody else; I figured that Williams, the vice president, and them other directors would run things.

But when we got home, after a rotten trip, she ast me to come and see her at the office. I goes, and there she is, walkin' up and down the rug just like her

husband was always doin'. When we had shooken hands, she says:

"Well, Mr. Dixon, you didn't have no success in the West."

"No," I says. "We run into some tough luck."

Then she ast me was it tough luck or rotten ball playin,' and I says it was some o' both. Then she says:

"We'll try and stren'then your team. I and Mr. Williams, the vice president, has decided we got to spend some dough for new players. I have gave Mr. Sullivan orders to go scoutin' round the colleges."

"Lay off'n the colleges," I says. "We don't need no more ornaments. What we should ought to have is some ball players. Besides that, you can't buy no men off'n the colleges. They don't sell 'em."

She says: "I guess we can get a hold of 'em if we slip 'em big sal'ries." Then she says: "I'd like to make this here club a team of gentlemen, and they're more gentlemen in the colleges than anywheres else."

They was nuthin' for me to do then but beat it out o' the office and get a drink o' brandy.

WE kept on playin' our best, and that was about good enough to get us beat oftener than we win. But I was satisfied with the way we was goin'. I knowed we wasn't topheavy with class. Sullivan came in from scoutin', and I ast him where was his collegers. He says:

"I've been everywhere in the rah-rah circuit, and I aint saw no ball player that could carry bats in the Japanese League."

So I figured we wasn't goin' to be pestered with none o' them there birds that does nothin' but kick the ball round because they got the habit playin' football.

The skirt had been travelin' a lot and hadn't gave me no bother to speak of. But when she come back, my troubles begin. She come out to the games and set in a box clos't up to our bench. We was playin' Brooklyn one day, and Rucker was good. We was a couple o' runs behind along in the eighth and no hope o' catchin' up, with him goin' that way. They was two of us out, and then Rucker walks somebody and Red Smith boots one, so they was two on when it come my turn to hit. I starts up, but she calls me over to the box.

"Mr. Dixon," she says, "this would be a good place for a home run."

I says: "Yes, this is the right spot. I s'pose you'd like to see me hit one."

"You bet I would," she says.

"Well," I says, "which fence do you think I should ought to hit it over?"

"I don't care which fence," she says.

Well, I goes up there and done my best to obey orders. Nobody never swung no harder'n me, and the way I was wallopin' at 'em, I'd of knocked one o' them walls down if I had of connected. But I missed three and we didn't score.

Do you remember the day you fellas give us that awful beatin'—twelve to nothin'? Cheney worked for you and we didn't never have a look-in. What do you think she pulled after that game? She waited for me outside o' the park and says she wished I'd tell Mr. O'Day not to never let Cheney pitch there no more.

I says: "It wouldn't hurt my feelin's if he never pitched nowheres."

"Well," she says, "I hope you'll see to it, because my doctor tells me the spitball aint sanitary."

Then, one day, she ast me what made Hub's cheek bulge out so when he worked. I told her he had a ulcer on his teeth. She ast why his face was swole up that way only when he was pitchin', and I told her I didn't never work him only on days when his teeth was pretty sore, so's the batters'd feel sorry for him. She must of knew I was kiddin', but she never called me for it.

She had me worried to death with stuff like that. She wanted the suits sent to the laundry after all the games and says all of us should ought to quit slidin' because it dirtied us up so much. I got so's I stuck in the club-house a couple of hours after the games, so's to be sure and not run into her when I come out.

Well, she goes down to Yale college on some party or somethin', and when she come back, we was just finishin' up with the Western clubs. We was out in practice one day when I seen her beckon-



When we had shooken hands, she says: "Well, Mr. Dixon, you didn't have no success in the West."

in' to me. I goes over to where she was settin', and she says:

"I've got you a new player."

"Who is he?" I says.

She says: "His name is Mr. Baker, and he has just went through Yale. He will meet you in New York."

Then I ast her what position did he play, and she says: "He aint made up his mind yet. He has been busy learnin' his lessons."

Then I ast her wasn't he on the Yale team, and she says: "No, but he could of been if he had of wanted to. The coach told him so, but he didn't have no time to play. You could tell the minute you seen him that he was a born ath-a-lete and he's a gentleman too, and I b'lieve he will help you in more ways than just one way."

"Well," I says, "they's only one way he could help us and that is to get in there and play ball. If he can do that, I don't care if he's a gentleman or a policeman."

Then I ast her what sal'ry was he goin' to get.

"Oh," she says, "you wont need to bother about that. I've already fixed that up already. I have gave him a contract for five thousand."

I ast her did she mean five thousand for five years, and she says: "No, I meant five thousand for this year."

Then I says: "That's as much as I'm gettin', and this here guy aint even made good yet."

"He'll make good all right," she says. "You can tell that from just lookin' at him, and he comes off'n a good fam'ly."

WELL, we goes to New York, and I was waitin' round the lobby o' the hotel for the baggage to come in, when Kelly, the secretary, calls me over to the desk. He pointed out a name on the hotel book and ast me who was it, because the guy was registered as belongin' to us. "William Baker Junior, Boston Baseball Nine," was what it says. Do you get that? "Boston Baseball Nine." Before I ever seen him, I knowed just what he was goin' to look like, and when I seen him, he looked just like I knowed he was goin' to. But he was a big bird—so big he couldn't get no clo'es big enough. He looked like as if he was goin' to bust right through 'em. His hair was plastered back off'n his forehead, and his shirt and tie would've made a rainbow jealous.

He come up to me and says: "Is this the head coach?"

I says: "Yes, whatever that is, I'm it."

"What time does the game start?" he says.

"Three-thirty," I says, "but we get out there about a quarter after two."

Then he ast me couldn't they start it some other time because he had a engagement. I says I would excuse him, and he says: "Thanks." Then I says: "I'll excuse you all the time if you say the word." But he says no, that wouldn't be right, because he felt like as if he should ought to do some work oncet in a while to earn his pay. Then he says he was pleased to of met me and walked away.

I guess he must of kept his date at a soda fountain or wherever it was he had a date at, because he didn't show up out to the park and I never seen no more of him till the next mornin'. Then he come to see me while I was writin' a letter and ast me could he have six passes to the game. I says: "You'd better take ten," and I writes out a pass for ten on one o' the hotel letter-heads, and I signs Otto Hess' name to it. He says "Thanks," and walked away. If I'd of signed President Bryan's name, he'd of thanked me just the same. And the pass would of been just as good.

I come out o' the hotel about one o'clock and starts for the elevated, but the colleger was standin' on the sidewalk and he hollered at me. He ast me was I goin' out and I says yes, I thought I would, because I didn't have no other date. Then he ast me would I ride out with him because he'd ordered a taxi. They wasn't none o' my ball players had ever tooken me to the park in a taxi before, but I didn't have no objection, so I and him piled in, and out we goes together.

When we got through ridin', I says, "You better let me split with you," but he says, "They aint no splittin' to be did. It's in my contract that I use cabs to and from the grounds," and he tells the driver to charge it to the club. Well, I butts in and says, "Here! You can't get by with that stuff. If you're out to give the club a trimmin', you better pull it when I aint round." Then what does he do but pull his contract out of his pocket and show it to me, and there it was, in black and white, that he was to be gave rides on the club to and from the parks where we played. Can you beat that?

We come into the grounds and I took him in the club-house and had Doc give him a unie. He made a holler because they wasn't no feet in the stockin's and I told him he was supposed to wear socks besides the stockin's. So he leaves on the reg'lar socks he'd wore with his street clo'es, and they was purple!

I wisht you could of heard the ball players ride him. They pulled some awful raw stuff, and if he hadn't of been such a boob, he'd of lost his temper and tried to lick somebody. But I don't b'lieve he never wised up that he was gettin' kidded. Even when Hub called him "Gertie," it didn't seem to make no difference to him.

WE goes out to warm up and I notice that he don't have no cap on. I was goin' to tell him about it, but the boys says: "No. Let him play bareheaded and give the crowd a treat." They wasn't much practicin' done. The New York bunch come over round our bench so's they wouldn't miss nothin'. I give him a ball and a catcher's glove and told Tyler to throw him a few. George just lobbed one at him and he got it on the meat hand. He raised a holler and tells Tyler he shouldn't ought to throw so hard. I yells at him to use his mitt, but he says the ball stung his hand right through it, and after tryin' all the wrong ways they is o' catchin' a ball, he quit and set down on the bench. McGraw calls me over and ast was I startin' a chorus or what. I told him how I happened to get a-hold o' the bird, and then I ast him did he want to make a trade. He says:

"What'll you take for him?"

I says: "Oh, I'll give him to you for Matty and a piece o' money."

"No," he says, "I don't want to cheat you. Take the grandstand and a chew o' tobacco."

Well, I sends him up to take his turn in battin' practice, and he acted like as if the bat was as heavy as one o' these here steel rails. Hess slops a slow one up to him, and instead o' swingin', he ducks out o' the way and tells me he aint used to battin' at such swift balls. Hess hears him pull that and the next one he throwed was a fast one, just as fast as he could throw it. Mr. Baker turns white

as a sheet and drops his bat and walks to the bench.

I stuck him in the outfield in fieldin' practice, but he looked so rotten that I took him out o' there for fear o' gettin' him killed. I called him in and says:

"You've did enough for one day, so go in and change your clo'es and you can watch the game from the stand. Maybe you'll run acrost that crowd I give you the passes for."

He was willin' to quit, all right, and the fun was over for the day. After the game, I send a long telegram to Williams, the vice president, and tells him what a joke our new player was and that it was throwin' money away to even pay his board, let alone that Fed'ral League sal'ry he was gettin'. I didn't get no answer from Williams, but a letter come from the skirt. She give me a call for not sendin' the telegram to her instead o' Williams and ast me how could I judge if a man was a ball player when I hadn't only saw him one day.

Well, I wires to Williams that I was through, because I'd signed to manage a ball club and not to run no burlesque show, but he jumps on a train and comes over to New York to see me. He says they was tryin' to get her to sell out her stock and that him and the other directors appreciated what I'd did for the club and wanted me to stick.

So I stuck and went along the best I could. I didn't pay no more attention to "Gertie" except to tell him to beat it to the club-house before the games started. He kept on comin' out to the park, wherever we was playin', and puttin' on his unie, without no cap, and settin' on the bench till the practice was over. Then he'd go in and put on one of his eight or nine different suits o' clo'es, and go up in the stand and watch the game from there or else go to the matinée or somewheres.

I didn't hardly ever say nothin' to him, but I couldn't make the rest o' the bunch lay off. They tipped their hats whenever they seen him. While he was settin' on the bench, they'd take a shot at him with the ball, and oncet or twicet they hit him, but not wheres it hurt him bad. He thought it was a accident when he got hit, but I knowed better. Every oncet in a while, somebody'd happen to step on his feet with their spikes, and then they'd beg his pardon. Some o' them left their caps off while they was practicin' and hollered "Ouch!" when they catched the ball. And on the train they'd get together and give college yells. He didn't never get sore, and I don't s'pose I would of neither if I'd been gettin' five thousand for changin' my clo'es a couple o' times a day.

They tried to get him in the poker game, but they wasn't nothin' doin'. He says he liked to play bridge w'ist but that was all the cards he knowed. When we was on trains, he spent the time lookin' at the scenery or readin' magazines.

I remember one night when we was goin' to Philly and he was settin' acrost the aisle from I and Hub. He was readin', and pretty soon he looks up from off of his magazine and says:

"You guys should ought to read this here story in here. It's a baseball story and it's about two teams bein' tied for the pennant on the last day o' the season, and one o' the teams had a star pitcher that was sure to win the decidin' game if nothin' didn't happen to him, so they stuck him in to pitch but in the first innin' he strained his arm so it hurt him every ball he throwed but he didn't say nothin' about it, but kept on pitchin' and win his game and the pennant, though he was sufferin' terrible pain all the while. I call that nerve!"

"Nerve!" says Hub. "Say, that wasn't nothin' to what I seen come off in the Southern League the last year I was down there. The Nashville club that I was with and the New Orleans club was tied for first place, and we had to play a extra game to settle it. We had a first sacker named Smith that was the greatest I ever see. Up to the first of August he was battin' .600 and it got so's the pitchers wouldn't give him nothin' more to hit but walked him every time he come up. He offered to bat with one hand if they'd pitch strikes to him, but they wouldn't take a chancet, and finally the umps'd just give him his base every time he come up without waitin' for the four balls to be throwed.

"Well, it come time for this final game

and we knowed we had it won if Smith was all right. The New Orleans club knowed it too, and they was out to get him. So when he got on in the first innin' on a base on balls, their first baseman deliberately stepped on his foot and spiked him somethin' awful. He couldn't walk on that foot no more, but he wouldn't quit, and after he'd drawed one of his bases on balls, every so often, he stole all the rest o' the bases hoppin' on his good foot.

"It come along the twenty-first innin' and the score was six to six. He'd scored every one of our six runs by walkin' to first and then hoppin' the rest o' the way. Well, he walked in the twenty-first and starts hoppin' to second. The catcher knowed they was no use to throw to second or to third neither, because Smith was so fast, even on one foot, that he was bound to beat it. So the catcher just kept a hold o' the ball, knowin' Smith wouldn't never stop till he got clear home. Along come Smith, hoppin' for the plate, and the catcher run out to meet him, but he hopped clean over the catcher's head and scored the run that beat 'em and won us the pennant. They was about sixty thousand people out there, and they tried to carry Smith off o' the field on their shoulders, but he hopped into the club-house before they could catch him. And when he took off his shoe, two toes dropped out!"

"My!" says the colleger, with his mouth wide open. "I should say that was nerve. And didn't this here Smith never get into the big league?"

"No," says Hub. "He got blood-poisonin' in that foot and they had to cut his whole leg off, and the National Commission's got a rule that you can't play in neither big league unless you got two legs."

AFTER that, Baker and Hub hung round together all the time. He fell for everything Hub told him, no matter how raw. He was givin' Hub a good time, and it'd 've been all right if we could of stayed on the road all the while, but I knowed when we got home, the doll'd ast me why wasn't I playin' him and then the trouble'd start.

Sure enough, when we come in off o' the trip, she called me to the office and put it up to me.

"Well," I says, "I don't think he's got enough experience yet. You just let me handle him and keep him on the bench awhile, and maybe he'll develop into a pretty fair ball player."

I suppose I should ought not to of gave her no encouragement about him, but I was figurin' all the time that she'd be boughten out o' the club pretty soon, and then I could can him. At that, I didn't have no objections to keepin' him except that I knowed he was cheatin' the club out of about two hundred bucks every first and fifteenth. If I had to let him go, the gang'd of missed him, especially Hub.

I run into Williams one day and ast him when was the skirt goin' to sell out, and he says they'd tried hard to get her stock away from her, but she'd made up her mind to stick it out till the end o' the season, but that Williams and the other directors was thinkin' about takin' it up with the rest o' the league and tryin' to force her out, but she'd gave 'em her promise that she'd sell in the fall if they still thought she should ought to. So they was nothin' for me to do but make as good a showin' as I could and figure on next year.

It was after the mornin' game on the Fourth o' July that she horned in again. She tells me that her brother and bunch of his friends from Yale college is comin' to the afternoon game, and they want to see their pal perform. I says I'd let him practice and they could watch him if they come out early enough, but she says, no, that wouldn't do; some o' them boys was sayin' that they didn't b'lieve he could play ball, and she wanted to show 'em that he could.

Well, I thought awhile, and then I made up my mind that if he had to be gave some position, he might as well have mine and I could take a rest. So I tells the umps about the change and then I goes back to the bench and sits in a corner where they wasn't nobody could see me.

I wisht you could of been there. The papers had a lot o' stuff about it, but they didn't tell more'n half. Hub was pitchin' and we was playin' Philly. He



I didn't hardly ever the bunch lay off. They tipped their gether and give college yells. He didn't if I'd been gettin' five thousand for changin' my

got the first two of 'em out, and then Cravath hits one down to the colleger on a perfect hop. I was lookin' for him to throw it wild after he got it, but Pat Moran was coachin' at first base, and he hollers to him to throw it to second. So what does he do but just like Pat tells him to, and naturally Maranville wasn't there to cover because they wasn't no play. So the ball goes out in the outfield, and Cravath got clear round to third base. Then Magee busts one, and they got a run. I thought Hub'd be sore, but he wasn't. When he come in to the bench, he was laughin' his head off, and he says:

"Don't never take me out o' this game. This is one battle I want to see all the way through."

Well, Devore leads off for us, and he walks. The colleger's up next, and I tells him to bunt. The first two Rixey throwed him was a mile outside, but he bunts at 'em just the same. Then Rixey curves one, and he tries to duck, but he can't get out o' the way. The ball hit him in the sleeve or somewheres, and Rigler tells him to take his base, but he wouldn't move.

"What's the matter?" says Rig. "Why don't you take your base? Are you hurt?"

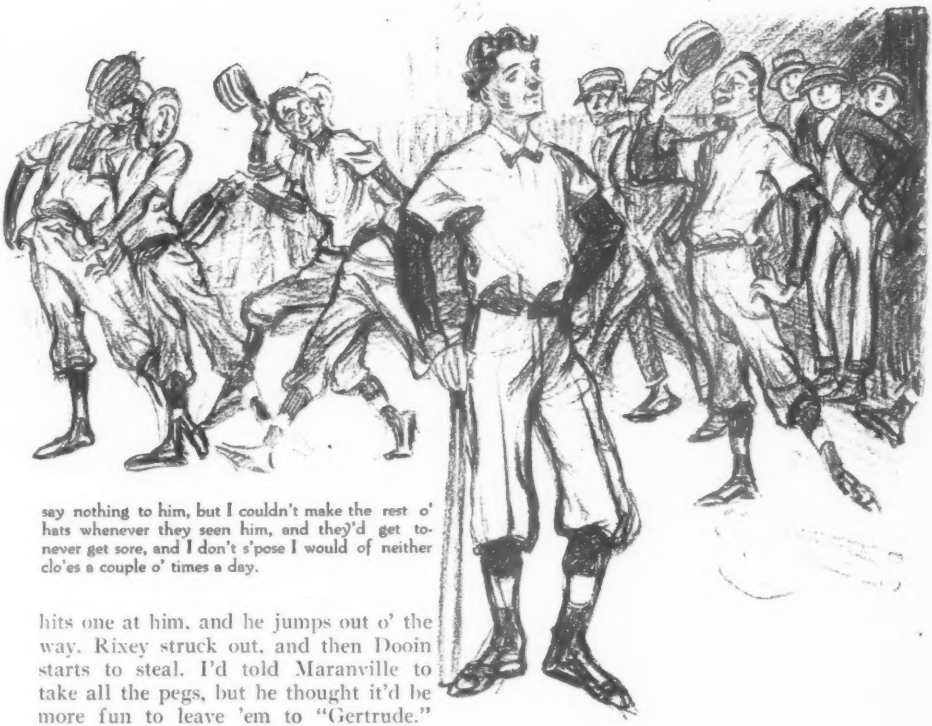
"No," says the colleger, "but the manager says I was to bunt."

Well, we had to drive him to first base, and then he steals second, or tries to, with Devore standin' right there. Devore don't move off'n the bag, so they tagged "Gertie" out. When he comes in, I ast him what was he tryin' to pull off. He says Luderus had told him to steal. Then I says:

"Don't never pay no attention to what them Philly guys tells you. If I want you to steal a base, I'll send you a night letter."

WE didn't score, and nobody hit nothin' at him in their half o' the second, though they was all tryin' to. Hub was tryin' to let 'em, too.

The third innin' was a bear. Dooin



say nothing to him, but I couldn't make the rest o' hats whenever they seen him, and they'd get to-never get sore, and I don't s'pose I would of neither clo'es a couple o' times a day.

hits one at him, and he jumps out o' the way. Rixey struck out, and then Dooin starts to steal. I'd told Maranville to take all the pegs, but he thought it'd be more fun to leave 'em to "Gertrude." So he hollers to him to cover. Whalin makes a perfect peg, and the colleger surprises everybody by catchin' it. But when he'd catched it, he steps on the bag instead of tryin' to tag Red. Then Red says to him:

"I bet I can beat you to third base."

Red starts runnin' with the ball right in Baker's hands, and instead o' throwin' it, he holds right on to it and goes after Red. He wasn't no slouch runner at that, and he made it a clos't race, but Red beat him. The bugs was a-hollerin' their heads off, and most o' the ball players was so sick from laughin' that they couldn't do nothin'. Rig' kept lookin' over at me to see if I wasn't goin' to take the bird out o' the game, but I didn't have no stren'th left to shake my head, even.

After the sprintin' race, they took the ball away from him and throwed it back to Hub. Byrne hits one at Hub, but he jumps out o' the way so our "star" can get it, and he goes over and sticks his feet in front o' the ball and it stops right clost to him. Byrne kept on runnin' past first base and yelled at him to leave the ball lay, so he left it lay and Byrne goes all the way home. After that, when anybody got a hold o' the ball, they'd throw it to him and he catched one or two o' the throws, but most o' them he got out o' the way of, and even when he catched 'em, he held onto the ball till everybody'd scored. They made twelve runs in that one innin', and we wouldn't never of got the side out if it hadn't only of been for the umpires. They was tired from workin' the mornin' game and this one, too, so they pulled a couple o' raw ones and wound it up.

Rig' come over to me between innin's and ast me did I think this was a joke. I told him it wasn't no fault o' mine, and explained how it had came off.

"Well," he says, "I've got to catch the midnight train for New York, and we

wont never get through in time if this keeps up."

"I can't help it," I says.

Then he says: "I can," and he goes back to his position.

The colleger's turn to bat come in our half, and Rixey rolls one up to him on the ground. Rig' calls it a strike, tryin' to get Baker sore, but he don't never even look round. It'd of been O. K. with him if they'd called a strike before the ball was throwed. Rixey rolled another one up, and Rig' calls it another strike. Then before Baker could say a word, and he wasn't goin' to say nothin' neither, Rig' puts him out of the game for kickin'. Most o' the crowd started home when they seen the show was over, but I didn't blame the umps none—I'd of did the same if I'd of been in their place. We finished up pretty fast after that, because they wasn't no chancet for us to ever come near catchin' up.

After I dressed, I forgot what I was doin' and walked right out o' the club-house without givin' the doll a chancet to make a get-away. There she was, layin' for me.

"What did you take him out o' the game for?" she says.

"I didn't take him out o' no game," I says. "The umps didn't like his language."

Then she ast me what was the matter with his language, and I says I didn't think the umps could understand it right.

"Well," she says, "if a umpire can't understand plain English, he should not ought to be no umpire, and I will write to the president o' the league and have both o' these here men discharged." Then she says: "Mr. Baker was doin' splendid and would of did still better if he had of been left in longer. He didn't catch all them balls that was throwed to him, but that's because he aint had no practice." Then she says: "I'm goin' out of town to-night, but I want you to keep on lettin' Mr. Baker play every day, and I'll watch the papers, and if I see where he aint playin', you'll hear from me."

WELL, I couldn't see no joke in it when I got home that night. The ball players was wise and knowed it wasn't my fault. But I was a-scared that the bugs and these here reporters would get after me if I let the boob play every day. And I was a little bit proud o' the work we'd did and didn't want to have it all wasted. I figured it all out, the way I was goin' to get rid of him. I was goin' to have one o' the pitchers hit him with the ball in battin' practice—not hard enough to kill him, but just so's it would scare him out of baseball. I thought he couldn't stand the gaff and would quit in a minute.

I gets out there early the next mornin' for practice and frames it up with Young, a big busher we had that was fast as a streak and hog wild. I sends him out to pitch to us and then tells the colleger to go up there and swing till he learned how to bat. It was prob'ly a dirty trick, but I couldn't think o' no other way.

Well, I pulled a boner when I says anything to this here Young. What I should ought to of did was say nothin', but just stick him in there to pitch natural, and then he'd of hit the bird by accident. But when he was tryin' to hit him, he couldn't even come clost. He was tryin' to be wild, and he pitched more strikes than he ever done before in his life. Gertrude didn't hit nothin', and nothin' hit him. So fin'lly I give up and sent Young to the club-house and started the reg'lar practice.

Fallin' down on that made me meaner'n ever, and I doped out something else. I tells the colleger he stood too far from the plate when he swung at a ball. I says: "When you go up to bat in the game, keep one foot on the plate," figurin' that the guy that pitched for Philly would try to drive him away and either wound him or scare him to death.

Alexander worked for them, and Baker stood right on top o' the plate. Dooin called the umps' attention, and the umps warned him, but he wouldn't move. Fin'lly Alexander shot one up there and he didn't duck in time. It catched him in front o' the ear, and he dropped like as if he was shot. I bet I was the most scared guy in the world. For a minute I felt like a murderer, and I wasn't never so glad in my life as when I seen him get up. He staggered round a little, and I had 'em bring him

over to the bench. I stuck myself in to run for him, and some o' the boys took him in the club-house and got him fixed up. He wasn't hurt bad, though he got a mean lookin' bump.

WE was startin' West again that night and I didn't never expect him to show up for no trip. But there he was, down to the train, with his wagonload o' scenery.

"Well," I says, "you got your nerve."

"Yes," he says, "I'm goin' to show Hub that they's more'n one game ball player in the world."

He was still thinkin' about that one-legged guy in the Southern League.

We opened up in Pittsburgh, and I kept him on the bench. I knowed Mrs. Hayes would wire and ask me why wasn't he playin', and when she did, I wrote to her sayin' he was hurt by that there blow on the head. But that alibi wouldn't get by very long, and I figured I'd have to frame somethin' new.

The first night in St. Louis, I thought up somethin' and got Doc, the trainer, to help me pull it. I buys two tickets to a show and gives 'em to Doc with instructions to ask the colleger to go along. After the show, they was to go to Tony's for lunch. He was to order two beers, and then I was to drop in and catch Baker with a big stein in front of him. Then I was to swell up and suspend him for drinkin'. Doc done his best, but the bird says beer made him sick and he wouldn't have nothin' to do with it. So when I come in, he was eatin' some kind o' fancy sandwich and lappin' up a lemonade or somethin'.

He ast me the next afternoon why didn't I let him play, and I says:

"You aint no ball player and you wouldn't be no ball player if you kept at it a thousand years. You should ought to be trimmin' hats."

"Mrs. Hayes thinks I'm all O. K.," he says.

"Yes," I says, "and you could start one o' these here Carnegie li-berries with what she don't know about baseball." I says: "Why don't you quit?"

Then he says: "I can't quit because I can't afford to lose this here sal'ry."

I says: "What do you mean, you can't afford? You had plenty o' clo'es when you joined us," I says, "and you must of had money o' your own or you couldn't of boughten them clo'es."

Then he says his old man give him a allowance of a hundred a month and he spent all o' that on his clo'es, and that the old man had told him he would double this here allowance if the boy showed he could earn five thousand bucks a year when he got out o' college, and the old man didn't care how he earned it. So he'd told Mrs. Hayes the whole story and she'd tooken pity on him and give him the job. I ast him wasn't they no other way he could "earn" the money, and he says he s'posed they was lots o' ways, only this here way was easiest.

I says: "Yes, but you aint earnin' nothin' here. You might just as well stick fellas up on the street as draw a sal'ry as a ball player. You're stealin' it either way."

He just laughed, and then I says:

"Don't your old man care if you mix up with us tough guys?"

"No," he says, "the old man don't care, but the old lady does. I told her you was a nice, polite bunch o' fellas and she fell for it, or else she'd of made me cut this out and come home."

The hunch come to me all of a sudden, and I says:

"What's your old lady's name and where does she live at?"

He told me, and I couldn't hardly wait till I got back to the hotel.

I DON'T know now just what I wrote, but it was some letter. I told her we was a bunch o' stews and that when we wasn't lushin' beer or playin' poker, we was going to burlesque shows. I says her son was pickin' up a awful bunch o' language and drinkin' his fool head off. I says he was stuck on a burlesque queen and was spendin' all his dough on her. And I wound it up by sayin' that Dixon, the manager, had killed his wife and they wasn't no tellin' when he'd cut loose and kill somebody else. I didn't sign no name, but just put "From a Friend in Need" down at the bottom.

It was in your town that he heard

from her, and he showed me the letter. She says he was to come home at oncet and that she'd made the old man promise to come through with a extra allowance without makin' him do no work for it. But if he didn't cut out the ball playin' and beat it for home, he wouldn't never get another nickel out o' none o' them. She hadn't gave no reason for writin' this way, and he was up in the air. I told him we was sorry to lose him, but maybe it was best for him to quit playin' ball, even if he hadn't never started. He left us the second night in Chi.

ment with the skirt. Our winnin' streak wouldn't make her forget to ask me what had became o' Baker. When she ast me, I sprung the stuff about him gettin' a letter from his mother, but I didn't tell her nothin' about the letter I'd wrote. She didn't say nothin', but she looked pretty sore, and she forgot all about givin' me the glad hand for what we'd did in the West.

We done pretty well at home ag'in' St. Louis and Pittsburgh. Then you fellas come along and I guess I don't need to tell you that we was goin' good. I was



"That's a whole lot o' bunk," I says. "I didn't never have no wife, so how could I kill my wife when I didn't never have none?"

Hub was good and sore at me. He says I'd spoiled the season for him.

I felt so good about gettin' him off'n my hands that I went out there and played like Cobb or somebody the rest o' the trip. Maybe you fellas remember how I hit ag'in' you them last two days. I done even better'n that in Cincinnati and New York. It was the best trip we'd made in a good many years, and the bugs at home went crazy over us. They was ten thousand out to the first game of our serious at home with St. Louis—on a Thursday, at that.

O' course I knowed they'd be a argu-

beginnin' to think we maybe might keep it up and throw a scare into some o' you birds.

She didn't never come out to yesterday's game, but I didn't suspect nothin' wrong till Kelly, the secretary, come into the club-house after me. He tells me that she wants to see me down to the down-town office.

"All right," I says. "I'll beat it down there right after the game."

"No," says Kelly, "she wants you right now."

So I took my unie off and beat it down there in a taxi. The girl in the

front office told me to go right on in, and in I went. There was the dame, settin' at the desk where poor old Hayes used to set. And they was two big coppers with her. Without sayin' "How d'ya do" or nothin', she opens right up on me and says:

"These here officers is here to protect me. If you start somethin', you'll get nothin' but the worst of it." Then she pulls a letter out o' the desk and says: "This here letter is from Mr. Baker's mother, and in it she tells me why she made her boy come home. Somebody has tooken the trouble to tell her some fac's about this here ball club—*my* ball club that I was proud of! But I aint proud of it no more. I aint proud o' no gang o' hoodlums that don't do nothin' but gamble and drink and run round with actresses and lead young men astray."

"Is that all?" I says.

"No," she hollers, "that aint all. Mr. Dixon, you killed your wife!"

"That's a whole lot o' bunk," I says. "I didn't never have no wife, so how could I kill my wife when I didn't never have none?"

"Don't lie to me!" she says. "Even if you didn't never have no wife, you killed somebody, maybe a innocent girl that was wronged."

"Cut the comedy," I says. "They's nothin' to that stuff. Somebody's went and gave the old lady a bum steer."

"What for?" she ast.

"Prob'ly," I says, "because somebody was tired o' having that boob on the ball club and figured that was the best way to get rid of him."

"We wont discuss it no fu'ther," she says. "I called you up to tell you you aint managin' the club no longer. You can stay here under the terms o' your contract and play ball if you want to, but maybe you wouldn't want to work for the new manager."

"Who is it?" I says.

"That's none o' your business," she says. "I will tell you when the proper time comes."

Then I says: "Is the seamstress comin' back?"

"The *who?*" she hollers.

"That there colleger," I says. "If I was you, I'd get him back, because you and him is certainly a grand combination. It's hard to tell which one o' you knows the most about baseball, you or that bird. Even if you couldn't use him as no ball player, you could chop up his head and build a new grandstand."

"He was smart enough to go through Yale college," she says.

"No," says I. "He didn't never go through no Yale college. If they was any college that he went through, it was this here Wellesley college."

Then I turns and beats it for the door.

WELL, sir, they aint nothin' more to tell except one thing. When I come out o' the door into the outside office, I bumped right square into "Gertie." He was smilin' like a big kid, and he says: "Hello, there!" Well, I didn't say nothin' to him, but I give him a good kick in the shin, and I stepped all over his patent-leather shoes. Then I went on about my business.

I wired Knabe, and they wasn't nothin' to it. He told me to come on and join 'em in Pittsburgh, and I just had time to get my stuff together and catch this train.

I guess she wont try and get no injunction out agin' me. But I wisht she would. I'd like to tell my story to a judge, provided the judge wasn't no woman.

You know who's goin' to manage that club, don't you? And you know who's goin' to be president of it. Well, sir, I'll bet you anything you want to bet that they wont even finish in Mass'chusetts.

Another story by Ring W. Lardner will be in an early issue of The Red Book.



The CABIN DOOR

By Charles G. D. Roberts

A thrilling story of the woods, by a student and friend of the big four-footed hunters.

ILLUSTRATED BY NORMAN BORCHARDT

WHAT was known as the County Line Road, though in winter a highway of some importance for the sleds and sleighs of the lumbermen, was in summer little more than a broad, straight trail, with grass and wild-flowers growing undisturbed between the ruts.

Just now, in the late and sodden Northern spring, it was a disheartening stretch of hummocks and bog-holes, the bog-holes emphasized by a leg-breaking array of half-rotten poles laid crossways. It was beautiful, however, in its lonesome, pallid, wistful fashion, for its hummocks, where dry enough, were already blueing tenderly with the first violets; its fringes were sparsely adorned with the shy blooms of wind-flower, dog-tooth, and hepatica; and scattered through the dark ranks of the fir trees on either side were little colonies of white birch or silver poplar, just filming with the first ineffable green.

To the girl who, bundle in hand and with skirts tucked up halfway to the knee, was picking her steps along this exasperating path, the wildness of the scene, — its mingled harshness and delicacy, — brought a pang which she could but dimly understand. The pale purpling of the violets, the aërial greening of the birch tops against the misty sky, the solemnity of the dark, massed fir trees—it was all beautiful in her eyes beyond anything words could suggest; but it made her heart ache with something like an intolerable homesickness.

This was incomprehensible to her, since she was already, in a sense, at

home. This was her native wilderness, this was the kind of chill, ethereal, lonesome spring which thrilled through the memories of her childhood. And she was nearing — she could not now be more than twelve miles from — the actual home of her childhood, that gray cabin on the outskirts of the remote and wind-swept settlement of Stoney Brook.

For the past three years—going on four now, indeed—Sissy Bembridge had been away from this wild home, working hard, and saving her wages, in the big shoe factory at K——, down by the sea. Called home suddenly by word that her mother was ill, she had come by train to the end of the branch, and tried to get a rig to take her around by the main road to Stoney Brook. There was no rig to be had for love or money. Too anxious to wait, and confident in her young vigor, she had left her luggage, tied up a few necessaries and eatables in a handy bundle, and set out by the short-cut of the old Line Road. Deaf to all dissuasions, she had counted on making Stoney Brook before night-fall. Moreover.—though she would never have acknowledged to herself that such a consideration could count for anything when all her thoughts were on her mother's illness.—she was aware of the fact that Connor's gang was stream-driving on the Ottanoonsis, and would be, by now, just about the point where the Line Road touches the river. Mike Farrell would be on the drive — and if she should chance to pass the time o' day with him, and let him know she was at home, why, there'd be no harm done to anybody.

For hours the girl trudged on, picking her way laboriously from side to side of the trail, and often compelled to stop and mend a bit of the corduroy roadway before she could get across some particularly bad stretch of bog. Her stout shoes and heavy woolen stockings were drenched with the icy water; but she was strong, and full of abounding health, and she felt neither cold nor fatigue.

In spite of her anxiety about her mother, her attention was absorbed by the old familiar atmosphere of the wilderness, the haunting colors, the chill, elusive, poignant smells. It was not till fairly well along in the afternoon, therefore, that she awoke to the fact that she had not covered more than half the distance which she had to travel. The heavy going, the abominable state of the road, had utterly upset her calculations.

The knowledge came to her with such a shock that she stopped short in consternation, almost dropping her bundle. At this rate she would be in the forest all night—for it would be impossible to traverse the bog-holes in the dark. Child of the backwoods though she was, she had never slept out, alone with the great trees and the mysterious night stillness. For the first time she cast a look of dread into the vista-ed shadows of the fir trees. Forgetting the violets, the greening birches, the delicate spring smells, she hurried on at a reckless pace which soon forced her to stop and recover her breath. The best she could hope was to reach the river shore before dark, and perhaps find the camp of the stream-drivers. She felt cold, and tired, and small, and terribly alone.

Yet, as a matter of fact, she was by no means so alone as she imagined. For the past half-hour or more she had been strangely companioned.

Keeping parallel with the road, but at a distance, and hidden in the shadows, went an immense and gaunt black bear. For all his bulk he went as noiselessly as a wildcat, skirting the open spaces, and stopping from time to time to sit up, motionless as a stump, and listen intently, and sniff the air with sensitive nostrils. But his little, red-rimmed, savage eyes never left the figure of the girl for more than a few seconds at a time.

For bears this was the hungry season, the season of few roots and no fruits, few grubs and little honey. The black bear loves sweets and berries far better than any flesh food, however dainty. And human flesh he either fears or dislikes so heartily that only under special stress can he bring himself to contemplate it as a possible article of diet.

But this bear considered himself under special stress. His lean flanks were fairly clinging together from emptiness. To his eyes, thus prejudiced, the fresh young form of Sissy Bembridge, picking its way down the trail, looked appetizing. Girl

was something he had never tried—and it *might* be edible. At the same time, this inoffensive and defenseless-looking creature undoubtedly belonged to the species *Man*, as his nostrils well assured him. Therefore, small as she was, she was apt to be very dangerous—even to go off, at times, with flame and a terrifying noise. He was afraid to show himself to her; but his hunger, coupled with curiosity, led him to track her — perhaps in the hope that she might fall dead in the trail and so make it safe for him to approach and taste.

The girl, meanwhile, under the influence of her uncertainty and fatigue, was growing more and more apprehensive. She assured herself that there was nothing to fear, that none of the wild inhabitants of these New Brunswick woods would dare to interfere with a human being. At the same time, she found herself glancing nervously over her shoulder, as the shadows lengthened and deepened and all the wilderness turned to dusky violet.

From the wet pools began the cold and melancholy fluting of the frogs, the voice of solitude; and under the plangency of it she found the tears running down her cheeks. At this she shook herself indignantly, squared her shoulders, stamped her foot, and plunged ahead with a firm resolution that the approach of dark should *not* make her a fool. And away in the shadows of the firs the bear drew a little nearer, encouraged by the fading of daylight.

Just as it was growing so dark that she found it hard to choose her path between the pools and the bog-holes, to her infinite relief she caught sight of a cabin roof, crowning a little rise of ground by the road-side. She broke into a run in her eagerness, reached the door, and pounced upon it breathlessly. But there was no light in the window. With a sinking heart she realized that it was empty—that it was nothing more than a deserted lumber-camp. Then, as if in answer to her vehement knocking, the door swung slowly open, showing the blank darkness within. It had been merely closed, not latched. With a startled cry she sprang back, her skin creeping at the emptiness. Her first impulse was to turn and run. But she recovered herself, remembering that, after all, here was shelter and security for the night, infinitely preferable to a wet bivouac beneath some dripping fir tree.

She could not bring herself, however, to grope her way into the thick darkness of the interior. Stepping some paces back from the threshold, she nervously untied her bundle, and got out a box of matches. Lighting one she shaded it with her hand, crept forward, and cautiously peered inside. In the spurt of light the place looked warm and snug. She returned for her bundle, went in and shut the door. Then she drew a long breath, and felt better.

The camp was small, but dry and in good repair. It was quite empty, except for the tier of bunks along one wall, a rough-hewn log bench, a broken stove before the rude chimney, and several lengths of rust-eaten stove-pipe scattered on the floor. Lighting match after match she hunted about for something to serve as fuel, for she craved the comfort, as well as the warmth, of a fire, however tiny. There was nothing, however, but a few handfuls of dry, fine spruce-tips, left in one of the bunks. This stuff, she knew, would flare up at once, and die out in a couple of minutes. She made up her mind to go out again and grope about in the wet gloom for a supply of dead branches, though she was now conscious of a childish reluctance to face again the outer solitude. Almost furtively she lifted the heavy latch, and opened the door half way. Instantly, with a gasp, she slammed it to again, and leaned against it with quaking knees. Straight in front of her, not twenty feet away, black and huge against the gray glimmer of the open, she had seen the prowling bear.

Recovering herself after a few seconds, she felt her way stealthily to the bench, and sat down upon it so as to face the two windows. The windows were small—so small that she was sure no monster such as the one which had just confronted her could by any possibility force its way through them. But she waited in a sort of horror, expecting momently that a dreadful, shadowy face would darken one or the other of them,

and glare in upon her. She felt that the eyes of it would be visible by their own light, and she summoned up all her resolution that she might not scream when it appeared. For the time, however, nothing of the sort took place, and the two little squares continued to glimmer palely.

After what seemed to her an hour of breathless waiting, she heard a sound as of something rubbing softly along the logs of the back wall. She swung around on her seat to stare, with straining eyes, at the spot where the sound came from. But, of course, all was blackness there. And she could not keep her eyes for more than a few seconds from the baleful fascination of the window-squares.

The door of the camp was a heavy one, and sturdily put together; but along its bottom was a crack some half an inch in width. Presently there came a loud sniffing at this crack, and then the door creaked—as if a heavy body were leaning against it. She shuddered, and gathered herself together for a desperate spring, expecting the latch or the hinges to give way. But the honest New Brunswick workmanship held; and she took breath again, with a sob.

After this respite a thousand fantastic schemes of defense began to chase themselves through her brain. Out of them all she clung to just one, as possibly offering some hope in the last emergency. Noiselessly she gathered those few handfuls of withered spruce-twigs, and heaped them on top of the stove. If the bear should succeed in squeezing through the window, or breaking down the door, she would light the dry stuff, and perhaps the sudden blaze and smoke might frighten him away. That it would daunt him for a moment she felt sure, but she was equally sure that its efficacy would not last very long.

As she was working up the details of this scheme,—more for the sake of keeping her terror in check than for any great faith she had in it,—the thing she had been expecting happened. One of the glimmering, gray-blue squares grew suddenly dark. She gave a burst of shrill, hysterical laughter, and ran at it, as a trapped rat will jump at a hand approaching the wires. As she did so, she scratched a bunch of four or five matches, and threw them, spluttering and hissing, in the face of the apparition. She had a glimpse of small, savage eyes and an open, white-fanged mouth. Then the great face withdrew itself.

Somewhat reassured to find that the monster could be disconcerted by the flame of a match, she groped back to her seat, and fell to counting, by touch, the number of these feeble weapons still left in the box. She had only six more; and she began to repent of having used the others so recklessly. After all, as she told herself, *that* bear could not possibly squeeze himself through the window, so why should he not amuse himself by looking in at her if he wanted to. It might keep him occupied. It occurred to her that she ought to be glad that the



The door creaked, as if a heavy body were leaning against it.

bear was such a big one. His face alone had fairly filled the window. She would save the remaining matches.

For a good ten minutes nothing more happened, though from time to time her intent ears caught the sound of cautious sniffing on the other side of the log walls, as if the enemy were reconnoitering to find a weak point in her fortress. She smiled scornfully there in the dark, knowing well the strength of those log walls. Then all at once her face stiffened, and she sat rigid, clutching the edge of the bench with both hands. The door had once more begun to creak and groan, under the weight of a heavy body surging against it.

There was a sound of scratching, a rattle of iron claws, which told her that the beast was rearing itself upright against the door. The massive paws seemed to fumble inquisitively. Then her blood froze. She heard the heavy latch lift with a click.

The door swung open.

She felt as if she were struggling in a nightmare. With a choked scream she leapt straight at the door. She had a mad thought of slamming it in the monster's face and bracing herself, however impotently, against it. As she sprang, however, her foot caught in one of the pieces of stove-pipe. She fell headlong. The pipe flew halfway across the floor, clattering over its fellows as it went, and raising a prodigious noise.

Through a long, long moment of horror she lay flat on her face, expecting a gigantic paw to fall upon her neck as a cat's paw falls upon a mouse. Nothing happened. She ventured to raise her head. The door was wide open—and the doorway quite clear. A dozen feet away from it, at the edge of the road, stood the bear, staring irresolutely. He had been rather taken aback by the suddenness with which the door had flown open, and had hesitated to enter, fearing a trap. The wild clatter of the stove-pipes had further disturbed him, and he had withdrawn to consider the situation. In one bound the girl was at the door, and had shut it with a bang.

The problem was now to fix the latch so that it could not again be lifted from the outside. She lighted one more precious match, examined the mechanism, and hunted frantically for a splinter of wood with which to jam it fast. There was nothing in sight that would do. She tried to tear off a strip of her petticoat to bind it down with; but all her underwear was of a most serviceable sturdiness, and would not tear. She heard the bear moving again outside. She heard his breathing close to the door. Desperately she thrust a couple of fingers into the space above the latch, so that it would not lift. Then with the other hand she whipped off one shoe and stocking. The stocking was just the thing. And in a minute she had the latch secure.

It was no more than secure, however, before the weight of the bear once more came against the door. From the heavy, scratchy fumblings the girl could perceive that her enemy was trying to repeat his former manœuvre. On this point, at least, she had no anxiety. She knew the door could not now be unlatched from the outside. She could almost afford to laugh, in her satisfaction.

But her satisfaction was of brief life. The door began to creak more and more violently. It was evident that the bear, having once learned that this was a possible way in, was determined to test it to the utmost. The girl sprang up. She heard the screws of a hinge begin to draw, with an ominous, grating sound. Now, at last, the crisis was truly and inevitably upon her. And to her amazement, she was less terrified than before. The panic horror had all gone. She had small hope of escape; but her brain worked calmly and clearly. She moved over beside the broken stove, and stood, match in hand, ready to set fire to the pile of dry spruce tips.

The door groaned and creaked. Then the upper hinge gave way, and the door leaned inwards, admitting a wide streak of glimmer. For some moments, thereafter, all sounds ceased, as if the bear had drawn back cautiously to consider the result of his efforts. Then he came on again, with more confidence. Under his weight the door came crashing down, but slowly, with the noise of yielding latch and snapping iron. As it fell, the girl scratched the match, and set it to the dry stuff.



In the doorway the bear paused, eyeing suspiciously the tiny blue spurt of the struggling match.

In the doorway the bear paused, eyeing suspiciously the tiny blue spurt of the struggling match. After a second or two, however, he came forward with a savage rush, furious at having been so long balked. The girl slipped around behind the stove. Just as the bear reached the place where she had been standing, the spruce tips sparked sharply and flared up in his face. With a loud *woo-oof* of indignation and alarm he recoiled, turned tail, scurried out into the road, and disappeared.

In a couple of minutes the cabin was full of sparks and smoky light. The girl ran to the door, and peered out. Her heart sank once more. There was the bear, a few paces up the road, calmly sitting on his haunches, waiting. He had seen camp-fires before, and he was waiting for this one to die down.

Sissy Bembridge knew that it *would* die down, at once; and then,—well, her last card would have been played. She wrung her hands—but in the new self-possession which had come to her, she could not believe that the end had really arrived. It was unbelievable, that within some half dozen minutes she should become a lifeless, hideous, shapeless thing, beneath those mangling claws. No, there must be, there *was*, something to do, if she could only think of it.

And then it came to her.

At first thought the idea was so audacious, so startling, so fantastic, that she shrank from it as absurd. But on second thoughts she convinced herself not only that it was the one thing to be done, but also that it was practical and would almost certainly prove effective. But there was not a moment to be lost.

Snatching up one of the fragments of stove-pipe, she used the edge as a shovel, and carried a portion of the blazing stuff to the open doorway. Here she deliberately set fire to the dry woodwork, nursing with hand and breath the tiny, uplicking flames. She fed them with a few more scraps of spruce scraped up from another bunk, till she saw that they would surely catch.

Then, with her stove-pipe shovel, she started another fire in the further corner of the camp, and yet another in the uppermost bunk. When satisfied that all were fairly going, she retrieved her stocking from the broken latch, reclothed her naked foot, and set her bundle safely outside. Then she looked at the bear, still sitting on his haunches a little way up the road; and she laughed at him. At last, she had him worsted. She darted in through the doorway—now blazing cheerfully all up one side—and dragged forth the heavy bench, that she might have something dry to sit on while she watched the rapidly spreading conflagration.

Her calculation,—and she knew it was a sound one,—was that the cabin, a solid structure of logs, would burn vigorously the whole night through, and terrify the bear to final flight. If it should, by any chance, die down before full daylight, she would be able to build a circle of small fires with the burning remnants. And she felt sure that in daylight her enemy would not dare to renew the attack.

In another ten minutes the roof was ablaze, and soon the flames were shooting up riotously. The woods were lighted redly for hundreds of yards around; the pools in the road were like polished copper—and the bear was nowhere to be seen. Sissy dragged her bench and bundle still further away, and sat philosophically warming her wet feet. The reaction from her terror, and her sense of triumph, made her so excited that fatigue and anxiety were all forgotten. She grew warm and comfortable; and finally, opening her bundle, she got out a package of neglected sandwiches and made a contented meal.

As she was shaking the crumbs from her lap she heard voices, and pounding, splashing hoofs, from up the trail. She sprang to her feet. Three lumbermen came riding into the circle of light, and drew rein before her in astonishment. "Sissy — Bembridge — *you!*" cried the foremost, springing from his saddleless mount. The girl ran to him.

"Oh, Mike," she exclaimed, crying and laughing all at the same time, and clutching him by the arm. "I *had* to do it! The bear nigh got me! Take me to Mother, quick. I'm *that* tired."

A COMPLETE RÉSUMÉ OF THE OPENING INSTALLMENTS OF

"EMPTY POCKETS"

"EMPTY POCKETS" is vastly more important than just a daring uncovering of life secrets. It is a great human story of the people and customs of this country that looms up with the work of Dickens or Hugo.

Like Mr. Hughes' "What Will People Say?" this is a novel of New York. It is built around the life of a gay, profligate millionaire, "Merry Perry" Merithew, and his effect on five young women: Aphra Shaler, the little pig who brought herself to the New York market; Maryla Sokalska, who was born shortly after her parents' flight from Russian Poland; Red Ida, a pick-pocket; a girl from the Middle West, who ran away from her parents rather than go back with them; and Muriel Schuyler, the beautiful young aristocrat, whom twenty years of petting and luxury could not spoil.

"Merry Perry," whose modishly tailored pockets had always been sieves for the outpour of gold, loathed his East Side neighbors, the empty-pocketed poor. Whenever he was asked to visit the slums of New York, he always answered that it was the last place on earth where he would be found. It was. He was found there dead one morning, on the roof of a tenement, grasping in one blood-stained hand eight fine strands of a woman's copper-colored hair.

Immediately began the hunt for the woman whose tell-tale hair would expose her as the last companion of the dead roué. Hallard, a reporter who knew every chapter of Merry Perry's life-history backwards, struck first for Aphra Shaler, the last, best known recipient of Merry Perry's princely support. He had only the copper-colored hair and a hat-pin of peculiar design for clues. He found Aphra and her limousine ready for flight, her copper-colored locks of the day before bleached to ash and her hat-pins covered by a veil. Before he could stop her, she was gone, flinging behind her the taunt, "Look up Muriel Schuyler. He liked her, and she has copper-colored wool." Hallard set the words down as the natural jealousy of the foul for the fair and turned to the possibility of Red Ida having lured Merry Perry to rob him.

BUT it was true that the "busy little humming bird," Merry Perry, had known Muriel Schuyler, who had begun going to parties just as he had left off.

A year before Merry Perry was found dead, he happened to fly in his hyrdoplane over the Schuyler yacht as it neared New York City. Muriel asked about Merithew, and her father's criticism of him aroused her curiosity.

While driving across the town, her automobile struck a crippled newsboy. That was the beginning of a day which introduced a carefree girl to the most fascinating and dangerous fop of her world and to a terrible understanding of what empty pockets mean to both the rich and the poor.

Muriel worked over Happy Hanigan, the stunned boy, till Dr. Clinton Worthing, a young ambulance surgeon, arrived. But he was more interested in the attractive Muriel than in Happy. Before she left, to carry the cripple home in her car, he had won an invitation to take tea with her that afternoon by telling her he would find out how she should proceed to have the crippled child made well.

HAPPY'S tenement home was a revelation to Muriel. She left it amid the thanks of the boy's mother for her offer to pay for the difficult operation that would make Happy like other boys. A sound of moaning in the bleak tenement hall caught her attention. A poor Italian mother was mourning over her baby boy, kidnaped and held for a ransom of five thousand dollars. Unless the ransom was paid the boy was to be cut in pieces. Muriel blessed her father for his wealth and promised she would return with the five thousand. She got into her car, only to meet the saddest procession she had ever seen. A Russian girl, gone insane, was being taken from her parents to be deported. Their heartrending cries compelled the weary Muriel to stop and promise she would keep the poor girl from being sent back to the horrors of Russia if she had to go to the president to do it. And then she made for her father's office to get the ransom money.

Merry Perry Merithew was there before her to borrow five thousand dollars from her father. Schuyler had to introduce her to the profligate. Then she demanded the money and, to her horror, her father refused. But the sentimental Merithew was in tears at her story. He increased his request to ten thousand, and promised her five if he got it. Muriel's father refused Merithew, got rid of him, and took Muriel back to their summer home. But when Merithew 'phoned her that he had finally borrowed his ten thousand and would give her half if she would come over to the yacht club and give him one dance, she promised with palpitating heart to come.



EMPTY

THE NOVEL OF NEW YORK WHICH

By Rupert Hughes

Author of the Famous Novel
"What Will People Say?"

CHAPTER IX

MURIEL sat back from the telephone and stared at it with awe. It was like the mouth of a gargoyle, and a kind of curse hung about its black lips. With syllables of light enchantment it had offered her an adventure; but as sometimes candies grow sour upon the tongue, so sweet words may lose their savor in the ear.

To steal away from home to a yacht club and dance with a married man of whom her father disapproved and whose name she dared not mention to her mother: that did not sound so well in the remembrance.

But to refuse to go and by refusing end the hopes of the pitiful Italian woman whose stolen child she had promised to ransom: that was not pretty either.

Everybody danced. The place was respectable. The crowd about her would be the select coterie usual at the yacht club: wives and daughters and their friends.

She wondered that she was making so much of a problem of it. If one of the fellows she played with had dared her to sneak through a window and go out in a motor-boat to skim the creamy moonlight off the Sound, she would have thought it a lark; and if the young man got foolish, she would smack his face for him and accept his apology, finish the cruise and sneak home in the delicious fatigue of a harmless mischief.

But there was something about Mr. Merithew that was uncanny to her. She could not know yet what it was. He invited her to dance with him in a brilliantly lighted room in a large crowd. At the end of the dance he was to give her five thousand dollars for a charity. It was a deal of money, and it meant a great deal to him. Why should she hesitate? The dance was just a little graceful tribute to her; something less trite than enclosing the money with a sheaf of roses. That was all, and yet, why did she feel uneasy? It was the high stakes perhaps. Yes, it must be the high stakes.

Muriel was so peculiarly uneasy about Merithew that suddenly her muscles sent her hand out to the telephone to call him up and cancel the engagement. But when Central murmured:

"Nummmba, please!"

She said: "Never mind!" and set the receiver back on the hook.

MURIEL'S thoughts were caught now by the memory of Dr. Worthing. She looked up the number of the hospital once more and calling it, brought to the very porch of her ear the voice of the distant young man.

"Is this Dr. Worthing?" she said, and had back an indifferent:

"Yes."

"This is Miss Schuyler."

"Oh." It was just a syllable, yet it conveyed: "So you are the young woman

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POCKETS

EVERY AMERICAN WILL WANT TO READ

Illustrated by James Montgomery Flagg



A COMPLETE RÉSUMÉ OF THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF "EMPTY POCKETS" IS ON PAGE 49

who invites strange gentlemen to tea in a closed-up house and neither appears nor sends word to the servants; you leave your guest to be treated like a burglar scouting for information. And now after abandoning me on your doorstep for half an hour you have the front to call me up several hours later!"

All this Muriel read in his monosyllable. Much virtue in an "Oh!"

She cried: "I'm just too terribly sorry for words, Dr. Worthing. I wouldn't have had it happen for worlds, not for worlds! But you see my father carried me off, simply dragged me home by the hair of the head. He wouldn't let me stop to telephone or anything. I absolutely could not get away from him a single minute."

"Oh!" was again the sole comment. But now it said to her: "So that's it! I understand. I feel better. I thought I wasn't mistaken in trusting you. Please don't worry about it another minute. I thought you had forgotten me and now I find that you were remembering me all the time."

At least thus much she extracted from that capacious "Oh!" Then she shrilled along the wire:

"Can you ever forgive me? Of course, you can't, but will you?"

"I'll try," he said with a comfortable chuckle.

"And will you also try to keep one more engagement? It's awfully important, you know."

"Is it another tea party?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, no. This time I—well, are you going to be up early in the morning?"

"Doctors don't have early or late. All hours look alike to the poor doctor. What time are you going to be up?"

"I hope to reach New York before ten."

"And you want me to call at your house?—again?"

"You'd never trust me again. Let me come to you."

"You to me!"

"Would it be very improper?—there at the hospital?"

"Dozens of women come here every day. They are sad sights, most of them, not at all like you."

She clipped this short: "Then I'll call for you at ten o'clock sharp."

"I'll be here."

"And you've found out about the boy? There is hope for him?"

"Yes, it requires an operation, but it's a beautiful one."

"Ugh! How can you call an operation beautiful?"

"Anything is beautiful that straightens a cripple or makes a sick body well."

"Oh, I see! Oh yes, indeed! Well, good-by, till to-morrow morning."

"Good-by."

She felt that he was wonderful to think of such things, to be at work at the trade of righting with science the wrongs of fortune. She sat back and

smiled at the telephone. It was a good gargoyle now.

How different Doctor Worthing was from Mr. Merithew! Perry's only industry so far as she could find out was the squandering of money on himself. Yet he had been capable of such a height of sacrifice as to double his debt so that he could give half of it away. That was dividing his cloak with a beggar in saintly style. Yet there was something not quite wholesome about him; something not quite convincing about his generosity and his deference.

Young Dr. Worthing was utterly unlike him. He was youthful, earnest, bossy and—aseptic. He was worth a dozen Merithews.

And yet sometimes the wholesome is less engaging than the morbid, the safe than the dangerous. To a normal woman a serpent is an object of horror mitigated by fascination; the deadlier it is the more fascinating it is.

HAVING resolved to dare all and go to the Club, Muriel's next problem was how to get there. If she asked for one of the cars, her father and mother would know of it, and she could not stop at this crisis to argue the matter out with them.

She sat in the telephone closet meditating and suffocating till she had to go out for air. She met her mother in the hall, and her mother said:

"Oh, Muriel, I forgot to tell you that Winnie Nicolls was here to see you half a dozen times to-day. He's got a new car and he wants you to christen it. He wants to name it 'Muriel.'" A whimsical fashion of naming motors had begun a brief life.

At the mention of Nicolls' name Muriel shook her head wearily. Her mother cautioned her:

"Be nice to him, my dear; he adores you. Better call him up and ask him to run over in the morning."

"All right, Mumsey dear," Muriel answered with an angelic brightness which her mother credited to a refreshing obedience. It was due instead to the sudden realization that she could use Winnie and the new car for transportation to the tryst with Perry Merithew.

II

THE nicknames of the great are rarely to their advantage. Many of the loftiest and bravest have been called by diminutives that would not have honored a pet lamb or a kitten.

Winthrop Nicolls was, or soon would be, so rich and with so solid and wide a wealth, that he would make even such brilliant capitalists as Jacob Schuyler look shoddy. Yet his majestic first name was doomed to be belittled to "Winnie," and its wearer seemed doomed to fit it.

It was difficult to look at his yellow-white hair, like unripe corn, his pale eyes of indigo water, his skim-milk skin, and his nursery smile, and think of him as the lord of a hundred million dollars. It was hard for Winnie to think so.

He faced his past and his future with the paralyzed terror of an infant that has toddled into the thick of Broadway, and stands crying in all directions while traffic is hauled up short until a policeman or a bystander can run out and take him by the hand. Only, nobody could lead Winnie out of his wealth.

He wanted Muriel to take him by the hand and save him from its menace. He loved her, had loved her from the time when as a fellow-infant at Newport or Biarritz she used to take his pail of sand away and spank him with his own little shovel. She was then a trussed-up, spindle-legged little snipe that had not learned mercy. As her head grew up and her skirts grew down, she continued to bully him more and more delicately. Sometimes when he broke a roller skate in Central Park she would lend him one of hers and they would scud with clasped arms along the steep walks among the racing pauper brats in the fine democracy of childhood while their nurses stormed in vain. Winnie was always afraid, and Muriel dragged him all the faster till he howled for mercy.

With the ruthlessness of the helpless, who cannot help themselves to anything except some victim's time and strength, Winnie settled himself as a pensioner on Muriel's heart. Eventually Muriel grew tired of supporting him. For years now she had been running away from him.

To-night for once, she suddenly found his company desirable; he could pay an installment on his debt by being handy. She went back to the closet, called up his home, got him to the telephone, and bullied him into coming over at once.

She had taken off her street suit when she reached home and thrown on a light evening gown for dinner. It would serve to dance in, now.

Muriel could have marched out at the door with everybody's approval to meet Winthrop Nicolls, but she had committed herself to an escapade, and she wanted to complete it. She went up the front stairway with dignity, stole down the back stairway without meeting a servant and hastened out on the service porch. She ran along the muffling grass through the mysterious formal gardens with their plumy fountains, out past the lodge-keeper's vine-smothered home to the street. No one saw her. She hid behind a shrub while automobile after automobile flashed by in a nebulous swirl till at length a motor came spatting up behind a searchlight of an almost biting glare.

In it was Winthrop Nicolls, bareheaded and eager. He stepped out and helped her in, and began to back round for a return along the road he had come by. But Muriel said:

"What do you say to dropping in at the Yacht Club for a while?"

"No, thanks. I want to show you the speed of the new car—'Muriel,' her name is, if you don't mind."

"I don't mind, but I'd rather like to stop at the Club for a few minutes. Just for a dance or two."

"Ah, no, let's spin. I want to spin." He whimpered like the baby everybody kept him. But Muriel was obstinate.

The very car seemed to sulk along. Muriel was in a tangle of remorses at her multiplex deceptions. She felt a reproach in the innocence of the very moonlit water where the yachts were nodding at anchor like a great flock of wild geese asleep.

There was a drowsy animation about the Club-house veranda. In all the deeper shadows couples were ensconced. At dimly lighted tables groups of people seemed to have fallen a-doze over their mint juleps and rickeys. But inside the house a small band was whacking and tootling, and dancers were earnestly at work. At that time the fever of the dancing sickness was at its very crest. The people at this club were inviting pneumonia (which never accepts invitations) by tangoing themselves to a glow and then plunging into the cold outer air to shoot icy drinks into their horrified insides. The shock seemed not to shatter but to temper their fine steel.

Muriel looked for Mr. Merithew. She saw him on the floor, gyrating in a hesitation waltz about the stately form of Mrs. Tom Johns Bettany. Everybody called her by all three names; or for short, Mrs. T. J. B.

Muriel did not approve of Mrs. Tom Johns Bettany, and she regretted to see Perry Merithew in such company. It would be a duty to get him out of her clutches.

III

MRS. T. J. B. was old enough to have a daughter who looked to be nearly as old as her mother; for Mrs. T. J. B.'s white hair had the effect of a powdered wig. In fact, she had not honestly earned white hair. The swift high life had brought a few patches of gray into her tresses long before their time. She had thereupon adopted a snow white "transformation" and given out that it turned white in a single night from grief over T. J. B., who had run his motor off a bridge and had died a double death as he had lived a double life.

Nobody believed his widow in this or any other story, but the white hair was undeniably becoming to her; it gave her the air of a shepherdess at a *bal poudré*. Her manners and morals were appropriately Watteau.

She had several sons whom she loved devotedly at convenient hours, and disgraced discreetly. She had a gift of love and deceit for nearly everybody—except other women. She neither loved them nor deceived them—not even her daughter Nadine, who despised, adored and imitated her mother.

The daughter, generally known as "Pet," had no reputation left by the time



To Muriel, Maryla's presence here seemed a crime. The very fact of being a flower gave her a right to a place in the
on. She rose and went to the machine and stopped Maryla's hand at the wheel. "Do you know
bundle you into that taxicab downstairs and take you for a good,



sun. It is the right and the business of flowers to decorate the light. Muriel felt one of those impulses of hers coming
what I am going to do with you?" said Muriel. "No, ma'am," said Maryla. "I am going to
long ride." Maryla laughed. Angels don't happen nowadays.

she was sixteen. The general verdict concerning Pet was: "She's as bad as they make 'em," but also that she was "an amusin' little cuss." Everybody was afraid of her, afraid to cut her lest she cut back, afraid to omit her from invitation lists lest she start a war of reprisal. Besides, the Bettanys were related to nearly everybody, and to brand them was to be involved in the scorchy smell.

Recently Pet had shown an alarming interest in Winnie Nicolls. Muriel felt that Pet would get him if somebody didn't watch out. Winnie felt it too and clung to Muriel. Muriel was afraid that she would have to marry Winnie to save him from Pet. But first she must save poor Mr. Merithew from Pet's mother. After trying to catch his eye, she dragged Winnie out on the floor and set him to the hesitation waltz, whose rhythm he had not yet learned. Muriel, as usual, had to do the leading. She steered Winnie in Mr. Merithew's wake till she overhauled him and spoke him:

"Good eve-ning Mr.—Meri-thew!"

Perry did not know her voice well enough to recognize it. He wheeled Mrs. Tom Johns Bettany around till he could see who had named him. He almost fell out of her arms as he recognized Muriel.

"The next is mine!" he called.

"All right, if it's a maxixe."

"It shall be."

"All right."

Then Winnie spun her away again, leaving Perry to pacify Mrs. T. J. B.

"I thought you had the next with Pet," said Mrs. T. J. B.

"The next after the next," lied Perry. She knew he lied but she did not care to fight her daughter's battles.

When the music died out Perry Merithew delivered Mrs. T. J. B. at a crowded table, ordered her a long cool drink, and set forth across the floor. Pet leaned forward expectantly. When he passed her by, she gasped. She saw him go up to Muriel Schuyler, of all people—saw her rise with a smile!

Pet had not thought it of Muriel. She disapproved severely. She was shocked. There is nobody whom the indiscretion of good people shocks so much as it shocks bad people. Pet left her place and sat down by her mother. They exchanged glances of anger and suspicion.

IV

THE maxixe at that moment was just beginning its sway as the supplanter of the tango. It was still chiefly left to the professionals who performed elaborate duets about the floors in alternation with the general dances. But a few progressives had taken lessons, and Muriel was one of these; Perry Merithew another. He had not studied anything in his life as he studied the new dances. He was proud of his maxixe.

Muriel was afraid of Mr. Merithew. He was even more afraid of her; he was as afraid of her innocence as the devil is of holy water. He had resolved not to flirt with Muriel, even if she made the first advances, as most of the women and young girls did. Whatever ulterior interest he took in her, he had gauged her as a girl of quick temper and innate honesty. She might take permanent umbrage at a premature liberty.

He did not know that Mrs. T. J. B. and Pet and young Nicolls were watching that dance with vital interest. The two women were puzzled by Perry's icy aloofness as he danced. He kept as far from Muriel as he could without letting her go entirely. This was suspicious in him.

They took their positions side by side with his right arm back of her, and as the languorous contralto melody of the Brazilian courtship dance began to hum, they set forth on the voyage, four steps on the left heel, four on the right and so through the various figures, *les à côté*, *la corta jaca*, the back two step, and all the turns and dips.

Merithew kept the maximum distance from Muriel, held her hand daintily as with pincers, accomplished the ritual with the lofty solemnity of a sacred dance. During that part of the maxixe where he must raise his elbows above her shoulders and clasp all four hands under her chin, Muriel glanced up coquettishly at him, now on this side, now on that, according to the formula. Though the pantomime was purely mechanical, she was studying his eyes. She found a polite cordiality in the lenses, that was all; but

back of them she thought another emotion lurked. It was what one suspects behind the soft irises of a purring leopard. But she could not quite make it out. It needed all of Merithew's control to keep the fur over his claws. He could hardly prevent his relaxed arms from tightening about that fresh, rich body. His heart beat madly under his boutonnière. But he controlled his muscles and his expression and paid her the homage of indifference. He even spared her any compliment except one:

"You dance wonderfully."

"So do you," she said.

And then the music stopped. And with it Muriel's heart sank.

"My money!" she gasped. "You promised it and now—"

He bowed and commenced to applaud. It had become the regular habit for the dancers to applaud and beg for a few added measures. It was a kind of tribute to the women they had danced with. It implied insatiability.

The maxixe tune began anew, and Perry put out his arms. Muriel stepped into them in skater poise and they began heeling forward. Perry Merithew was a trifle less remote. He pleaded:

"I wish you'd give me just one more dance, Miss Schuyler."

"Impossible, Mr. Merithew. My mother doesn't know I'm out."

He relished this confession of duplicity. It gave him hope for the future, but he pretended to sigh:

"Then I suppose I'll have to pay you what I promised."

"Terms strictly C. O. D.," she said.

"Your company comes high but I must have it," he sighed. As he shuttled to and fro back of her, he released one of his hands, slipped it into the pocket inside his waistcoat, drew forth and palmed a little roll of five one-thousand-dollar bills, with a rubber band about them.

In the figure where the man holds the woman's hands aloft and she pivots in a slow circle, as if suspended from his fingers puppet-wise, Merithew transferred the tiny parcel to her hand. Her fingers closed on it just as the last strain of music ended. Then she thrust the costly wafer into the bosom of her gown, the only pocket she had. She could not restrain a triumphant little toss of the head.

Neither of them realized that they had been closely watched. Winnie Nicolls' idolatrous eyes suspecting nothing, saw nothing. Mrs. Tom Johns Bettany and her daughter Pet suspecting everything, saw more than everything.

Mrs. T. J. B. whispered to her daughter:

"Did you see that?"

Pet nodded sullenly: "He gave her something. What do you suppose it was? It looked like cigarettes."

"It looked like money!" said Mrs. Bettany grimly.

CHAPTER X

WITH five thousand dollars in her breast pocket, Muriel felt highly important. She was afraid of herself at last. She bade Perry Merithew a careless good-night for the public and for himself:

"A million thanks! You are a very good man."

This almost floored him. He had just presence of mind enough to say:

"If I'm such a good man, when do you see me again?"

She stared at him in surprise. He explained hastily:

"To tell me about our Italian child, you know."

"Oh, of course. I'll telephone you tomorrow."

"Better let me call."

She stared at him with misgivings. He ventured another tack.

"Come over here and dance with me again."

"I don't think I'd better."

"Where's the harm?" he urged. "Haven't I a right to a little interest on my money, and a right to know what happens to it?"

"All right, I'll be here." She laughed, but uneasily. She did not like the complication, but she could see no way out of it without insulting her benefactor or returning him the money. That she must not do. She repeated her "Good night," but she didn't feel that he was quite such a good man.

She turned and picking up Winnie Nicolls with a long prehensile glance, made her way out dawdling and nodding here and there. She had braked down her feet but her heart was going at full speed.

When Winnie hoisted her into the car, she breathed a deep breath and felt important enough to reach up and pluck a pair of stars for her earrings. She breathed deep of the luxury of being important to somebody in distress.

II

MERITHEW was too much of a connoisseur not to have thrilled at the charm of Muriel, so delectable, so nearly ready, like a peach that the sun has ripened on one side. But Merithew was also too expert as a conquistador of women to attempt to pluck the peach too soon. He had offered Muriel no hint of gallantry; in fact, he found that she had left in his heart a most unusual emotion for him, a kind of reverence. And what is more reverend than a young girl of whom Nature is just making a woman?

When Muriel was gone from his arms, and from his sight, he felt an unbearable loneliness. He wanted to follow her, to be with her always; he wanted to possess her in all holiness. He wished he could marry her.

He happened to have a wife, but it would not be hard to be rid of her. She would have divorced him long ago if he had not threatened a fight. He clung to his wife not for her own sake, but for a protection against other women, those tiresome women who tried to turn every fleeting romance into a sentence for life.

But Muriel Schuyler—to be sentenced to life with her, would be equivalent to an exile into Paradise. He marveled at her extraordinary influence over him. He had just paid five thousand dollars to win her praise. He called himself a sublime jackass. Yet he felt that the investment was the best he had ever made. The other five thousand he had borrowed was to quiet another woman, who was blackmailing him.

That hurt. It always hurt Perry to pay a debt: to exchange a present treasure for a forgotten pleasure. But he loved to toss money away for a bribe or a tip or a trinket or a smile. He had paid Muriel Schuyler a large sum in advance. What was he going to get back for it? He wondered. What debt did it fasten on her?

Suddenly he realized that it put her under no obligation at all. She was just the transfer agent who would collect tribute from him and pay it to some Italian scum.

But he would not accept this version. Yesterday he had not known Muriel Schuyler. To-day she was his admirer, his partner in an escapade. She had danced with him and praised his dancing, and his good heart. This was progress. What might not the future bring?

HE thought to escape the next dance by keeping out of sight. But Pet Bettany cornered him on the veranda, went into his pockets for his cigarette case and took his cigarette from his lips to light her own. Then she seated herself on the railing in a graceful awkwardness, held him *en brochette* with a long steely stare and said:

"I say, Perry boy, what's the little doings between you and Muriel Schuyler? Some new intrigue?"

"What intrigue could I have with her?" he gasped.

"It's me that's asking you, you know, Perry."

"Don't be a fool."

"I'd be a foolisher fool if I believed you, old dear. What did you put in her hand?"

"In whose hand?"

"Oh, I saw you!" she sneered. "Come along, what was it? It looked like money."

He laughed violently but with such effort that she said:

"Quit it; you're a punk actor."

He eyed her angrily:

"Are you insane enough to accuse me of giving Muriel Schuyler money? Why, her father could buy and sell me and never know it."

"Her father, yes; but he's very close with her. Do you deny that you gave her money?"

"Of course I do."



Maryla was confounded almost to tears by the majesty of the Schuyler home, both outside and inside. She sat meekly on the edge of a haughty chair, so tremulous that she could hardly hold her cup.

"Then that proves it," she laughed. "I find that if I just copper everything you say, Perry darling, I come out ahead."

He was scarlet with surly confusion: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself and your dirty tongue."

"Thanks, duck. But you've lent money to me. I thought you might be lending Muriel a little on the same terms."

"You—oh, you—you—" He could not speak the words he thought even to her to whom his speech was so free. He left her without ceremony and walked away. The insult was so convincing that her triumphant laughter followed him. He turned and walked back, his eyes blazing: "Even you ought to have sense enough to know that Muriel Schuyler doesn't have to take money from me."

"No woman can ever have enough money, sweetheart. We're all grafters. Muriel is just learning the game, I suppose."

"Besides, I'm broke."

"That's when you're most generous, Perry. Like everybody else, you get stingy when you're in funds. If I'd known you were broke, I'd have beaten her to it. My dressmaker is awfully nasty. He wont give me any new fall clothes till I pay for last winter's. He'll let last spring's go over but he says he has to raise some cash to pay the customs on his new importations. You couldn't slip me a little till I get my next allowance, could you? Come along; they're playing a one-step. You can pass it over then. Or must it always be a maxixe?"

"I'm stony, I tell you."

"I was thinking that if you could, I should be able to keep my mouth shut about Muriel. Fact is, I might help you out; you could meet her at my house. She doesn't like us a dambit, but she might be willing to use us. What about it? eh?"

PERRY was choking with rage. He was not even tempted to tell Pet that he had given Muriel the money to ransom an Italian *ragazzo* with. Even his tardy imagination could foresee how such a fairy story as that would be received.

Pet was one of those shrill-voiced, loud-laughing creatures that occur in all circles, in royal courts no less than in farmsteads. No breeding seems ever to soften them.

If he told Pet the truth, her whoops would rouse all the dead in the clubhouse. He could think of no plausible lie. He could think of nothing but an impatient, idiomatic protest. He spoke it in the free language that obtains among intimate acquaintances who know better but do worse. He said:

"Look here, Pet, you mind your own business and keep your big mouth shut about a girl that's too decent for you to understand, or you'll wish you'd never been born."

Pet stared at him with a hateful shrewdness and took the threat with a shrug of amusement:

"It's like that, eh? Just like that?"

Then her laughter came, a big, peasant cackle that made everybody in the club uneasy, made everybody say "I wish she wouldn't!"

Even Mrs. Bettany rushed up and said, for the millionth time since Pet's birth:

"In heaven's name, less noise!" Then she smiled and asked, "Has Perry been telling you a funny story?"

"Yes," Pet shouted, "one of his very funniest."

She howled again, and Perry would have fled, but Pet caught him by the arm with her big and painful hand, and held him while she dismissed her mother curtly: "You go on about your business, Mamma."

WHEN Mrs. T. J. B. had doddered away shaking her head over the plebeian changeling she had had to rear, Pet said: "Look here, Perry, you'd better be nice to me, for I can be no end nasty to you, and I've been looking for something on your little Muriel. Winnie Nicolls likes her too well to suit me and this is just what I need. But I need the clothes worse. Think it over, old thing! You may go now."

That night Perry said his prayers backward: at least he vowed that he would never again attempt a humane deed with a worthy motive. It resulted in far too much wickedness and turmoil.

CHAPTER XI

THE next morning Muriel's problem was how to get to town. She finally accepted her father's invitation to visit his new library. He was an early riser, and they went down the East River in the cool of the morning. The new accessions to the library were wonderful treasures to be gloated over with a miser's clutch, and at any other time she would have reveled in the unique copies, the famous bindings, the time-browned pages that generations had thumbed and men centuries dead had annotated, or the old maids of books whose curious value was that their leaves had never been cut.

But Muriel was thinking only of her appointment with Doctor Worthing, trying to imagine a convincing excuse to escape.

The librarian almost wept over a Caxton of which there were only two in the world; and this one had a title page which the other one lacked. Jacob could hardly wait to get it out of his hands and brag about it to Muriel.

But Muriel was thinking of the living. She could not get her mind on the toys her father was pulling out of his Christmas stocking. She stared at a prayer-book given by an old king to his daughter with a dedication asking her to *"pray for your loving fader that gave you this booke and goddes blessyng therwith."* She could not read the old script, or even the little pasted-in translation of it. Her thoughts were in Batavia Street, and she said:

"Hadn't I better call up Mr. Chivot and see what he has done about the Italian boy and that poor girl?"

"Later, later, that can wait," said Jacob. "Would you look at this 'Morte d'Arthur?' Old Nicolls paid a million dollars for his last purchases, but he hasn't got a duplicate of this."

Muriel thought that King Arthur could wait better than the Angelilli or the Balinskys. There was a telephone extension in the library, and she got Mr. Chivot on the wire. He said that he had met unexpected obstacles. That was what she expected him to meet. The Angelilli family, he said, when he called with a detective, had received him rudely and ordered him and the police to get out of their sight and to keep out of it.

He had also called upon an important member of the Immigration Board at his club in the evening, but the gentleman had said that these things were regulated by laws and that while the laws occasionally inflicted hardships, it was for the general good that they should be obeyed and that it was a great mistake to make exceptions at the request of important people; especially at their request, since it confirmed the general opinion that people with a pull could do what they wanted with the laws. The end of the story of failure was Mr. Chivot's statement that he would keep both matters in mind, but that if he might presume to advise, if would be far better for Miss Muriel to take her father's advice and drop out of it.

Muriel could have screamed at the deferential-contemptuous tone he took. She choked as she said:

"Thank you ever so much, Mr. Chivot. Good-by!"

She had to be polite to her father's secretary, but she could talk to her father as she wished. She turned on Jacob with ferocity that made him forget the "Recuyell of the Hystoryes of Troye" that he held in his hand. She quoted Chivot's message in a burlesque of his wire-drawn tones, and she cried:

"That's what I get for appealing to you men. You dragged me home last night like a poodle on a chain, and your Mr. Chivot lectures me like a tutor. And between you a little boy gets cut to pieces, and a poor family gets torn apart. And what do you care? I ask you for a puny little five thousand dollars and you tell me I'm affected by the heat. But you've spent nearly a million dollars on this library. Mr. Merithew had the goodness to offer to borrow the money and give it to me, and what did you say? You said, 'It's not a bankable proposition.' Nothing human and kind and considerate and warm-hearted and pitiful is a bankable proposition. Well, you can keep your bankable propositions. I'm going to save those people if I have to break into the White House by a window like a suffragette. Besides, I've got the



Merry Perry had begun to realize that he was being taken in. He had volunteered Aphra one new gown as a peace offer-
past him. His enthusiasm for Aphra suffered an abrupt chill. He looked upon Maryla with
minded him of Muriel, for all their differences. She and her gowns seemed



ing. He had already been "run up the pole" for three; Aphra was putting on another, and there was still one more walking resentful eyes that suddenly wakened to her dreamy beauty. Her hair and her general hue re- to have been created together. She pleased his artistic soul completely.

five thousand dollars, and no thanks to you. And I know somebody who will help me save those poor wretches, too!"

Old Jacob had heard her tirade out in far more admiration than indignation. He loved her energy, and her grit, and her fervor; her disrespect was a minor matter. But when she announced that she had found the money he was startled, and wanted to know where and how.

She laughed bitterly and would not tell him. When a clock tinkled once, she started like *Cinderella* at midnight. And when she saw that it was already half past ten she fled down the great stairway like another *Cinderella* returning to rags and ashes. But she made the descent without losing a slipper.

Her father called to her down Jacob's Ladder but she did not stay to answer. She opened the big door herself while the old footman gasped. "Why, Miss Muriel!" She hurried along the street, and when no vacant taxi was to be found hopped aboard a downbound 'bus and so reached Thirty-fourth Street, where she took a taxi from the Waldorf-Astoria cab-stand and told the driver to fly to Bellevue Hospital.

II

HER appointment with Dr. Worthing was for ten o'clock. At eleven o'clock she was still fuming among the various entrances of the linked structures that are Bellevue.

At last she found a desk where a young woman sat back of a legend "Information." Muriel asked for Dr. Worthing, please, and for her name she gave the phrase, "He's expecting me."

Muriel was led into a small room and invited to sit down. In a moment Doctor Worthing was at the door. She did not recognize him at first, for he was not in his white uniform. He was in a blue serge suit with yellow shoes, and he carried a straw hat in his hand. He greeted her with a despairing smile that was rebuke enough. She rose and stood before him like a schoolgirl who is tardy.

"I'm so ashamed!" she said. "But you can't imagine how hard it was to get away. I had to run for it."

"So long as you're here," said Doctor Worthing, "that's enough. Let me look at the wounded forehead."

"Oh no, thanks, it's quite all right."

"Sit down," he said. She sat down with a gasp of delighted disgust at her submissiveness. When his hand brushed back her hair she quivered again and her face was suddenly all rosy. Yet where his fingers went, they left white streaks.

It startled Doctor Worthing to see what influence he had over her. He was of the sort who grow meek with power. He took off the adhesive strip with the aid of benzine. It hurt her a little, but him more.

"It's nearly healed already!" he cried. "What splendid health you have. You must have a good father and mother."

That was in his eyes a final diploma. Every day he saw poor souls condemned to carry inherited burdens with inherited weaknesses and to endure pain and blame they had not earned. Perfect health was to him as high a commendation as perfect beauty was to Perry Merithew. But Muriel exclaimed:

"That's a funny thing to say!"

"Is it?" he said, and instead of explaining asked ironically: "Aren't they good people?"

"Of course they are; though my father can be terribly stubborn. Yesterday he dragged me home, and this morning I had to run away."

She felt a surprising necessity to tell this strange young man all that had happened after she left him. And she felt an irresistible impulse to demand his aid. She showed him the five thousand dollars, and against her overridden judgment, told him that she had danced it out of Perry Merithew.

He listened with fascination to her story, and his eyes softened as she revealed her pity and her eagerness to help. But when the name of Merithew came to ear, the coda spoiled the whole symphony for him. The knowledge that

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A Woman's "Past"

By Albert Payson Terhune

HAS the young man any more right to "wild oats" than the young woman? It's a big question, and Mr. Terhune has woven it into a story as compelling as his famous "Whose Wife?"

ILLUSTRATED BY J. HENRY

THETIS BARRISON had come home from college, bearing with her, as fruits of a four-year battle, the following assets: a coveted A.B., some excess luggage in the way of classical and other abstract knowledge, and a certain nameless "stamp" which the most democratic and gloriously sane of feminine colleges imprints on its average graduate.

Thetis also brought home certain Ideas. But whether from college or from her outside reading or from a process of mental evolution, she herself could scarcely have told you.

She did not bore the world at large by expounding these Ideas. This may have implied rare tact or merely that the Ideas lay too close to her heart for public airing.

Rex Duff was the only man to feel the weight of a single one of Thetis', Ideas—and he, not until he brought his fate on himself by becoming engaged to her.

Duff was twenty-seven. Thetis was twenty-two. Three months after Thetis' graduation, their engagement was announced. They were happy, very, very happy indeed in this wonderful love of theirs.

Thetis', father (her mother was dead, else this story might not have been written) was happy, too. For Rex was a good fellow and was making money; and he always laughed at precisely the right point in all of Judge Barrison's stories.

Rex's mother was overjoyed at her only son's engagement—not merely because she liked Thetis, but because she wanted Rex to "settle down." For the boy had "enjoyed life." And his enjoyments had followed fairly close along the lines chosen by the average healthy, good looking, well-to-do youth of his age.

But his mother, who knew as little of her son's real life as do most mothers, had worried. A hint here, a guess or an unspoken surmise there, had troubled her vaguely. She wished Rex would marry some nice girl. The marriage service (as every mother knows) effects a magic and instant change in men's natures, whereby they henceforth and forever become purblind and deaf and listless toward all forms of temptation.

SO Thetis and Duff were engaged. And they were happy. And their parents were happy. And in the whole situation there seemed not the tiniest peg whereon to hang anything heavier than the most airy and commonplace of conjugal romances. There was no dark-eyed siren; there was no alcoholic craving, lying in wait for Duff. No wily villain threatened the calm joy of Thetis. Several men would have been overglad to stand in Rex's shoes, but none to the extent of plotting melodrama against his happiness. Trouble, if trouble there were, was bound to come from within. That was the only direction unguarded. And from within the trouble came.

It came — or began — one autumn night as Duff and Thetis were on the way home from the theatre. They had been to see a problem play of the newest and dreariest breed: a play wherein, as usual, The Woman suffers and The Man goes free. And for three endless acts, the author had asked in loud and persistent tones, through the mouth of each and every character:

"Why?"

The riddle had not been guessed at the curtain's final fall.

Duff had been frankly bored. Thetis, to whom Problems were still a novelty, had watched and listened breathlessly. When the curtain went down without disclosing the Answer, she had sought to supply one for herself, not only from her mentality but from her newly acquired Ideas.

Failing, she felt mildly irritated at mankind at large, for the unfairness wherewith her sex—on the stage, at least—was treated. And, upon the nearest representative of the unjustly dominant class, she turned, to wreak that irritation.

"Just the same," she announced, in the taxi, on the homeward journey, "it's not fair."

Duff, who had been absently eyeing the taximeter, agreed with fervor.

"But what can we do?" he added. "It's a monopoly and it can charge any price it chooses. People who don't like it can take street-cars or walk. On the Continent, now—"

"Rex Duff," she exclaimed, "what on earth are you talking about?"

"I—why—weren't we talking about taxi-rates?" he asked, waking from his reverie.

"No," she said indignantly, "we were not. We weren't talking about anything. We hadn't been, for a minute or more. But I was thinking about the play."

"It *was* pretty deadly, wasn't it?" he chimed in. "But Griffith was telling me to-day that 'The Haymakers' is a corking good comic opera, just alive with pretty airs. We'll go there, if you like, to-morrow night; and get the problem-taste out of our mouths."

"It was *not* 'deadly,'" she denied. "It was gripping. It made one *think*!"

"Not this one," he disclaimed. "I couldn't see anything in it except the same old wheezes and the bilious German and Scandinavian sex philosophy rehashed under a new name. It didn't grip *me*. I'm sorry, but it didn't. I haven't felt so badly sold since the time when I was a kid and spent a whole week's allowance on a ticket for Mrs. Fiske in Ibsen's 'Doll's House,' thinking it was a children's play."

"Do you mean to say you could sit there to-night and listen, unmoved, to that terrible arraignment of Man by Woman? Why, there's a whole sermon alone in that one line of the star's: 'It is always the woman who pays. *Why?*'"

"Why?" hazarded Duff, feebly. "I suppose because some poor sucker of a man has given her the money to pay with. That's what men seem to be here for."

"Oh, I don't see how you *can* joke about it," she retorted. "To me, it means so much!"

"But, dear," he urged, "why should it? What under the sky can there be in common between you and the type of woman in the play? Why, you couldn't even understand half the things she's supposed to have been through. And, please God, you'll never have a chance to understand them. Why should it mean anything to you?"

"It does. Because I'm a woman. And because women have always been slaves. But they are slaves no longer. They are men's equals, now; even if they used to be—"

"Men's superiors?" he supplemented. "I don't feel up to arguing feminism. I didn't know it interested you."

"It doesn't. But every woman must be interested in such a problem as to-night's—certainly, in the phase of the problem, for instance, that lets a man live his own life, up to the hour he marries, and yet forces a woman to give strict account of every day and every minute of hers, and that crucifies her if she puts one foot over the boundaries that he has thought nothing of crossing. And—"

"Dear, *dear* little girl," said Duff, gravely, "forgive me for saying so, but you haven't the faintest idea what you're

talking about. You've about as much notion of the subject you're trying to discuss as I have of—of Kensington embroidery—whatever that may be."

"You are mistaken," she answered with sudden stiffness. "It is a subject to which I've given a great, *great* deal of thought."

"Then, for heaven's sake," he begged, "don't, any more. It's a rotten problem at best. And it's a problem that hasn't any answer. Even the chap who wrote that yawnful play didn't try to answer it. He just bleated: *'Why?'* And grown people don't waste time, any more, in trying to answer the unanswerable. They accept conditions as they find them, and let it go at that."

"Why should I accept a thing I feel is wrong, just because expediency and conventionality have chosen to sanction it?"

"That line was in the play, too, wasn't it? I thought I heard it as I dozed off. In the third act? I'll tell you why we must accept things that expediency and conventionality decree, Thetis. Because expediency and convention are the net results of all the experiments that have been tried since the world began. The man in front stumbled into a pitfall. The man behind him dodged that hole and made a new path around it. The third man followed him; and, farther on, made a path around the precipice the second man fell over. The fourth man followed, and then continued the path in a half-circle about the bog that had drowned the third. And so on, through all the ages—everybody with brains dodging the snare that had caught the man just before him, until at last the path was pretty queerly twisted and intricate. And lots of people had forgotten the reasons for some of its sharp turns and doublings. But there *was* a reason for every one of them. Every one spelt *safety*. And the dual name of that path—the only safe and wise path to follow—is Convention and Expediency. The wilderness outside of that narrow track is white with the bones of people who thought they could stray from it—and live."

"It's a man-made track. But how about women?"

"Most of the white bones are theirs."

"If they left the twisted path," flashed Thetis, "it was because men shoved them aside from it."

" 'With the consent of the governed,' " quoted Rex.

"Oh, it's not fair!" she burst forth again. "It's a *man's* world. Why should a man's faults be condoned and a woman's be branded as unforgivable?"

"They aren't. The world is every bit as fair to women as to men. So is life itself. So is the law. For instance, men who commit murder are usually put to death. Women who do it are, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, let off lightly. Men who commit robbery—"

"Rex," she interrupted, for the taxi was drawing to the curb in front of her father's house, "come in for a few minutes. It's early. And there's still a light in Father's study. There's something I want to talk over with you."

"Why, of course," he agreed.

THEY found a grate fire smoldering in the library. Thetis loosened her opera cloak and sat down in front of the dim embers. Duff leaned against the mantel and looked down through the half light at her shadowy face with its crown of soft, dusky hair in which the dying fire-light was weaving strands of red gold.

For a minute, Thetis did not speak, but sat, her pretty brows knit, studying the dull red coals. Then she looked up.

"Rex," she said, "when I was fourteen I went to my first dance. A boy named Jimmy—I never knew his last name—came home with me. On the steps he kissed me. I didn't know he was going to. But he did."

"Horrible!" declaimed Rex. "Find out his last name and his present address for me, and I'll have his heart's blood."

"Then," went on Thetis, unheeding, "when I was seventeen, an army lieutenant, at Block Island, asked me to marry him. It was on the cliffs, by Clay Head, one afternoon."

"You didn't do it, did you?" Duff asked, in eager concern, puzzled, none the less, as to the trend of her whimsical revelations.

"Then," resumed Thetis, "the next year, one of Father's clients called here quite often. He asked me to marry him, too. He held my hand, and I had a hard time to make him let go. One night, on deck of the steamer going to England, when I was twenty, an Englishman tried to kiss me. I slapped his face. Since then, four men have asked me to marry them. If you insist, I'll tell you their names, though I'd rather not."

"No, thanks," he returned. "But what's the main idea of these sudden and terrible admissions? They're tremendously interesting, of course, but—"

"Once or twice, I have smoked a cigarette. Once, when I was spending the Easter vacation with Claire Burney, at Hampden, her brother, Cass, dared us to drink a cocktail he mixed. I drank it—or, rather, part of it. It tasted too much the way hair tonic smells, for me to finish it."

"Confessions of an incipient dipsomaniac!" he groaned, lamentably. "And Cass Burney's my chum, too! I never would have dreamed it was he who started you on your career of inebriety. It proves just what you said awhile ago: It's the woman who pays! Cass taught you to drink. And yet he's not even an occasional drunkard."

She paid no heed to heed to his kindly meant ridicule, but concluded her odd narrative by saying:

"There! To the best of my memory, those are the worst things and the only hitherto hidden things in my life. If there were more things and worse things, I'd tell them to you. I shouldn't want to, but I'd do it. Because then I'd know I had played fair and started with a clean slate."

"I find your list of black crimes fearfully hard to forgive," he responded. "But I absolve you. The hardest of all is that scandalous episode with one Jimmy—last name buried in oblivion. But I pardon you even that."

"Now," she added, "since I've told you everything, don't you thing it's only fair you should do as much for me? That we should start even? You say life is as fair to women as it is to men. Prove it by being as honest with me as I've just been with you. Tell me the things—the foolish or wrong things—you did before I came into your life."

"You wring my soul by forcing me to exhume my dead past like this," said Duff, with lugubrious solemnity. "But here goes: At the age of four—I remember it as clearly as if it were yesterday—I stole and ate a whole jar of strawberry jam my mother had just made. And then I lied and said the cat had eaten it. Or was it my doll I blamed? I forget. At six, I shook eleven pennies out through the slot of my sister's missionary box, and bought—"

"Stop!" she commanded, hotly.

"Yes," said he, "I was afraid the story of my guilty youth would turn your love to horror. I'm sorry, but—"

"Stop!" she repeated. "You understand me perfectly well. Why do you try to evade—?"

"But I—"

"I have told you everything that you did not already know about my past life. If the things I told you were petty and ridiculous, it is because there was nothing worse to tell. And you ought to be glad there wasn't. When two people enter a business partnership, each must have clean papers. There must be no hidden debts or complications to imperil the fortunes of the new firm. I believe it should be so in marriage. It is only just, only honest. I have always thought so. But that play we saw to-night has crystalized my hazy ideas. Now, I *know* those ideas are right."

"That wretched play!" growled Duff. "I never dreamed a man could buy so much trouble for four dollars as those two orchestra seats to-night seem to have let me in for. Next time, let's go to—"

"Please don't try to change the subject," she insisted. "I have told you everything in my past history that any Puritan could object to. Are you honest enough — do you respect my rights enough — to tell me everything in yours?"

He essayed to laugh, then looked down, perplexed, into her upraised, questioning face. This level-browed, steel-eyed Thetis was an unknown woman to him. Yet he saw she was in earnest—terribly in earnest. And the amusement died within him, to be re-



"Dear," he protested, "you are talking of things you don't understand—things you *can't* understand."

placed by something strongly akin to genuine worry.

"Look here, sweetheart," he said, 'this is all rank nonsense, you know."

"Is it?" she made cold answer. "Then, so is our engagement, I'm afraid."

"Thetis!"

"I mean it."

"I—don't understand."

"Let me put it very clearly, then. You know what I am. You know everything about me. I have no secrets from you. I know nothing about *you,* except what you choose to tell me. And that is practically nothing. I know your outward life, your family, your business. That is all."

"Isn't that enough? Surely—"

"No. There is not a man in any of your clubs who doesn't know more of your *real* history. Cass Burney, for example—"

"But what in blazes do you *want* to know, darling? And why do you want to know it?"

"I want to know at least as much about your history as you would want to know of the history of a motor-car or horse or dog you were buying. And I want to know it because I love you and because I hope to be your wife."

"If you mean, is there anything in my past life that will be a bar to our happiness or that makes me unworthy to be a good woman's husband, you know very well there is not. If you don't know it, you can have my word for it."

"I ask nothing better than your word—that you have never in your life done anything or lived in any way that you would not be perfectly willing for me to do or live."

"That's rather a big order—" faltered Duff, confused.

"Is it an order you can fill?" she asked calmly.

"Dear," he protested, rallying, "you are talking of things you don't understand—things you *can't* understand."

"I want to understand. I have a right to understand. Everything that concerns you concerns me, since our lives are to be put into each other's keeping. Has your life been as open to the day as mine, Rex?"

"Of course not," he said shortly. "You know it has not. I have been a *man,* with a man's temptations, a man's never ceasing exposure to those temptations, a man's nature. You have led a sheltered life—"

"And you consider the bargain fair?"

"The bargain? What bargain?"

"The bargain of marriage. Every marriage is a bargain: love for love; life for life; future for future."

"As for love, I—"

"I know. But mere love is not all. Love is a wondrous palace; but without solid foundations it must crumble and fall. It is of those foundations I'm speaking. And the corner-stone of the foundations is Honesty."

"Honesty? I am—"

"Is it an honest bargain: that I,—a 'sheltered' girl, as you called me,—that I, whose worst sins I have just confessed to you, should be asked to give myself in exchange for a world-battered heart, a set of second-hand emotions, a shop-worn past? Is it fair?"

"You don't—"

"*Is* it?"

"UPON my soul," he made answer after an instant's pause, "I don't know. I never thought. But it *must* be fair. For conventionality and expediency have made it so. And, scoff at them or gird against them if you will, those two are always right in the long run. Besides, I'm not pretending that it is a fair bargain to ask a wonder-girl like you to marry such a third-rater as I am. I never pretended it was. If women married only the men who were worthy of them, and vice versa, there'd be plenty of holidays for the license bureau clerks. I love you. And I—"

"And I love you," she returned, "with all my heart. That's why I want us to start abreast, fair and square. I don't want you to be worse than I am. I don't want to be better—one bit better—than you are. I'd rather be as bad as you—if your past life makes it impossible to be as good as I have had to be."

"Hush!" he commanded. "You don't realize what you are saying."

"I do!" she insisted. "And I mean every word of it. You ask me to sacrifice—"

"Sacrifice isn't a monopoly with women."

"No, it's merely a habit with them. You ask me to exchange my open past for your closed past—to marry a man who wont tell me anything of his life, although he knows everything of mine. I say again, since I can't raise you to my level, I mean to sink to yours."

"Thetis! *Don't* talk like that. It hurts me horribly. It's—it's like casting mud on an idol. You don't know what you're saying. You don't understand life."

"Then I'll learn it."

She said the words slowly, with almost exaggerated distinctness, rising as she spoke, and facing him.

"Then I'll learn it," she repeated. "We must be equal in all things, you and I, Rex."

"But, Thetis—" he began, horrified, angry.

"And now," she interrupted, "we understand each other. If there are hours, days, weeks, in your past, of which you refuse to tell me—then, before I marry you, there shall be blank spaces in *my* life, of which I shall refuse to tell *you*. You say life is equally fair to men and to women. In that case, you will have no right to reproach me when there is a sealed chapter in my story as well as in your own. Good night, dear."

Before he could get his breath, before he could make a move to detain her, the girl had turned swiftly and left the room.

"I'd like," muttered Duff, wrathfully, to himself, "I'd like to put on the gloves for just *one* round—one round would be enough and plenty!—with the wall-eyed Trouble-manufacturer who wrote that rotten play. Pshaw! She'll feel differently about it in the morning. She was tired and a bit hysterical."

DUFF was kept so busy at his desk next day that he not only had no time for lunch but could not even spare the usual morning five minutes to telephone to Thetis.

His oldest friend, Cass Burney, brother of the girl whom Thetis had been wont to visit during her college vacations—and, incidentally the maker of that famous first and only cocktail—chanced to run in to town late that afternoon from his suburban home. He called at Duff's office at about closing time.

Duff had planned to call on Thetis between five and six. But, instead, he permitted himself to be carried off by Burney to dinner at their mutual club. Thus, it was nearly nine o'clock when he arrived at the Barrison house.

Thetis' father met him at the door and fairly dragged him into the library. Judge Barrison was a badly flustered and somewhat frightened old man.

"Where have you been?" demanded the Judge, the moment the library door shut off Rex and himself from the hearing of any passing servant. "I called up your office at half past five, then your rooms, then every other place I could think of. I—"

"What's the matter?" demanded Rex, his voice vibrant with alarm. "Is anything wrong with Thetis? Where is she? What has happened?"

He broke loose from the Judge's detaining grasp and made for the closed door, as though to relieve his suspense by shouting to Thetis. But the Judge laid hold of him again.

"She's not out there," said the old gentleman. "She isn't anywhere in the house. I—I don't know *where* she is. You see—"

"Oh!" laughed Rex in a tone of absolute relief, "you gave me a fright, sir. I was afraid something had happened to her. But if it's only that she isn't home yet—"

"It isn't that. It's—it's *this*." Read it. It came on the five-thirty mail, just after I got back from the office. That's why I called you up. She says here that you will know about it."

But Duff was not listening. He had snatched a doubled sheet of paper Judge Barrison was holding out to him, and with fingers not wholly steady, he unfolded it and read:

"Father, dear: I've gone away. Never mind where. I am well and safe and I am" *(the words "we are" had been written, scored over with the pen and "I am" substituted)* "already having a glorious time. I think this will be the most eventful experience in all my life. You're not to worry about me. But, in

case you do, ask Rex about it. He'll know—as much as anyone ever will. Tell him from me that I am 'learning.' He will understand, I think. At least, he'll remember. And please be sure not to worry. Because I'm perfectly well and very happy. I'll be back safe and well—when I'm tired of living this way. I'll mail this as I" *(again "we" had been crossed out)* "get to the station. With dear love.

"Thetis.

"P.S. Don't forget your sandals if it rains. And you're not to work late at night, now that I'm not there to watch you. You know it always gives you a headache."

Taking the letter unceremoniously from Duff, who, wide-eyed and open-mouthed, was reading it for the third time, Judge Barrison thundered:

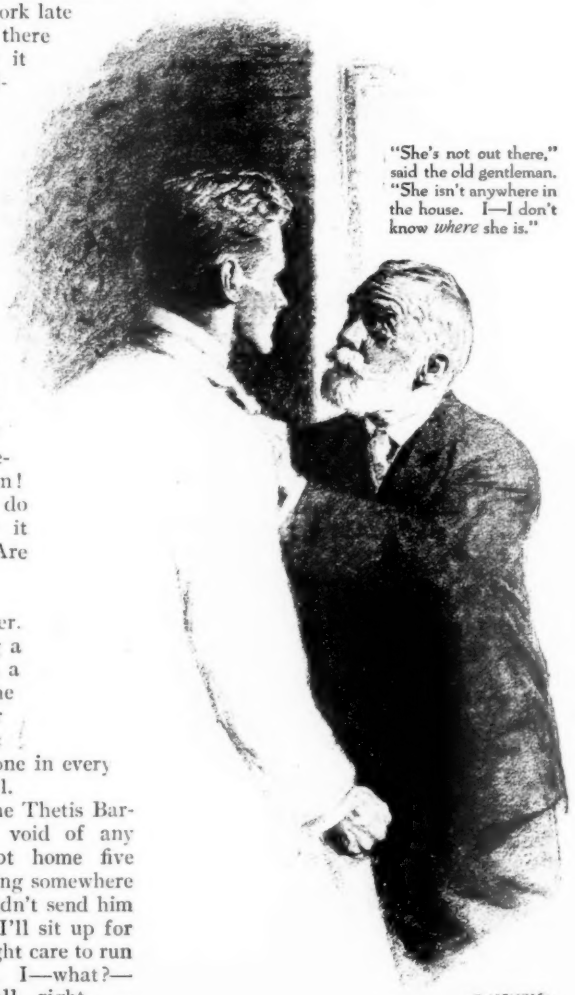
"That is what I send my daughter to college for, is it? To get the idea she can be independent enough to run off—God knows where — like this? Has she eloped, or *what?* She says you know something about it, young man! Let me hear what you do know, and let me hear it mighty quick! Speak up! Are you tongue-tied?"

IT was just a week later. Rex Duff was finishing a solitary club dinner when a page summoned him to the telephone. He made for the booth with frantic haste, as of late he had done in every instance of a telephone call.

"Is that you, Rex?" came Thetis Barrison's voice, cool, crisp, void of any trace of emotion. "I got home five minutes ago. Father is dining somewhere or other, it seems.... I didn't send him word I was coming back. I'll sit up for him.... I thought you might care to run in for a little while.... I—what?—Why, of course, I'm all right.... What?.... Oh, this 'phone buzzes so I can't hear a word!.... I'll expect you, then."

Duff did not wait to hear the click as she hung up the receiver. Getting out of the booth, he sprinted for the coat room, snatched up his hat and overcoat, and left the club as though the building were on fire.

In ten minutes he was ushered into the library at Judge Barrison's. And scarcely a minute afterward Thetis was



"She's not out there," said the old gentleman. "She isn't anywhere in the house. I—I don't know *where* she is."

advancing into the room to greet him. She had changed her traveling clothes for a white dress of some soft, clingy material. On her face, as she smiled up a welcome at Duff, there was not the remotest trace of embarrassment.

"Thetis!" he babbled. Then he became mute—not that he lacked words, but that there seemed so many he could not choose among them.

"You're looking thinner," she commented. "Have you been working too hard? Father is all right, is he? The servants said so, but servants never notice. Have you seen much of him since I've been—"

"Thetis!" he cried, finding his voice at last and choosing the most obvious of the myriad phrases that clamored for utterance. "Thetis! *Where* have you been?"

"I?" she asked, innocently. "Away, of course. Didn't Father tell you?"

"Oh, sweetheart! Was it fair to give us such a fright? Was it kind? You know how frightened, how starkly miserable I'd be! *Why* did you do it?"

"I'm sorry you were worried," she answered, coolly. "It was too bad. But it couldn't be helped."

"Couldn't be helped?" he sputtered, dumfounded. "Oh, *where* were you? With whom? *Why* did you go?"

"I'm afraid I can't answer all those questions at once," she said, laughingly, all unruffled, and apparently a little amused at his wild excitement. "Shall I begin at the end and work backward? Let me see: the third question was: 'Why did you go?' wasn't it?"

"Why?"

"The last evening I saw you I explained that. I told you I was going to sink to your level, since I couldn't raise you to mine. So I—I made my plans and—"

"You are insane! How can you say—"

"And," she resumed, cheerfully, "next day I went. Was Father much worried? I wrote to him not to be."

"Of course he was! But not a millionth as much as *I* was. It was a dreadful thing for you to do. Where did you go? With whom? Tell me!"

"That last evening, I asked you, in effect, where *you* had been in the habit of going and 'with whom.' You wouldn't tell me. Is there any good reason why I should tell *you?* Isn't there an old home-made proverb about 'Sauce for the goose?'"

"Thetis!" he implored, brokenly. "Don't hint at such things, even in joke. *Don't!* Tell me—"

"I'm not joking. You would tell me nothing about certain incidents in your life. Neither shall I tell you about this wonderful week of mine. You assumed that I ought to marry you on faith. I think you should do the same with me. In fact, Rex, you'll have to, if you marry me at all."

The girl's cool cynicism — a quality new to her—made him wince. He did not notice that the smiling lips were over-firmly set or that the gay voice was kept steady only by the exercise of supreme will power.

"You went away for a week, giving no explanation," he said, dully. "You gave me a week of unbelievable dread and terror and suspense. And yet you refuse to say a word about it. I—"

"When I asked you to tell me about *your* past you refused, point blank. And when I still begged you to, you put me off by saying I 'wouldn't understand.' Well, I understand *now*."

Thetis' hands, behind her back, clenched spasmodically. But she went on in her former light tone.

"And now that we are on the same level of mystery as to our past lives, nothing stands in the way of our happiness."

"*Happiness!*" he croaked. Lord!"

She came a step closer to him.

"Do you mean," she asked evenly, "that you think you wont be happy with me?"

"Happy?" he burst forth, wildly. "How could I be? How could I ever know one minute of peace, with this secret of yours always blotting out my sunshine?"

"Yet you expected *me* to be happy, under like conditions. Rex, do you honestly think it is reasonable of you to expect me — or any other woman — to pardon, unheard, all your past faults and follies, when you can't even forgive one unexplained week in my life?"

"That is different. *All* different! Can't you see?"

"I see that you are horrified at me, just because I tried to make myself more like you. I see, too, that you don't think you have any prospect of being happy with such a woman as I. I see, also, that you can't trust me any longer. Although you wanted me, on far less grounds, to trust my whole future welfare to you. I see all that. Is there more for me to see?"

"Where were you?"

"I can't tell you."

"With whom?"

"That is my affair. You have no right to ask. Henceforth, if you still wish it, all my life shall be an open page for you to read. But the past belongs to *me* —just as your past belongs to you."

He was silent. His head was bent, his eyes sick with pain.

"Rex," she said, very softly, coming closer to him.

He looked up.

"Rex, you no longer want to marry me?"

He did not answer.

"I was afraid not," she sighed.

HE made one final effort.

"Thetis!" he begged, "for heaven's sake, sweetheart, don't smash both our lives like this. *Tell* me!"

"I can't," she said, sadly. "And since you can't take me on faith, as you wanted me to take you, I—"

"Will you give me your word that there was nothing—"

"I wont answer that," she interposed quickly.

Another silence. Then, reading his haggard face, she said:

"You don't like to put it into words, so I will save you the humiliation. I am not the sort of woman you thought I was. You no longer respect me. Because I have, perhaps, come to be one tenth as bad as yourself, you see no chance of happiness with me. So you want to break our engagement."

She paused. He did not contradict her this time.

"I half expected it," she went on, a break in her voice, "though I was foolish enough to hope you would have the justice to see that I am quite as fit to be your wife as you are fit to be my husband. Since you can't see that—since you do not want to marry a woman who is no better than yourself—why, our engagement is over. There needn't be any scene. You are quite right—according to your lights. And I guess it's time for us to say good-by, dear."

She held out her hand. In its palm glowed her engagement ring. Duff eyed it dully.

"You wore *that*," he muttered, "when you—"

"Good-by," she repeated.

She turned half-way, her eyes brimming. And, the next instant, she was caught to him in a rough embrace that crushed her soft cheek painfully against his shoulder.

"No!" shouted Duff. "*No!* It isn't 'good-by!' And it is never going to be 'good-by!' I'd rather be unhappy with you, all my life, than be happy with any other woman on earth. I love you! Whatever you've done—whatever you've *been*, I love you. I love you with all the heart and soul and body of me—with all that's best in me, with all that's worst in me. I love you! Do you understand, Thetis? I love you."

He had forced back her head and was kissing her fiercely, adoringly.

"I love you!" he repeated. "I don't even ask how you spent that week, or how you intend to spend all the rest of the weeks. I love you!—That is all I need to know. That is all that matters, so far as I am concerned."

"I don't want love that has no respect in it," she sobbed, carried away on the flood-tide of his adoration, yet struggling to keep her resolve. "I don't want that kind—"

"But *I* do!" he declared. "If you've done anything wrong or heedless, you need me, now, ten thousand times more than ever you did. And this is the time of all others when my place is at your side—to shield you, to help you, to *love* you. You speak of 'respect.' I don't want to know what you've tried to do to forfeit my respect. But whatever it has been, I respect you and I reverence you more than any woman alive. And I shall, to the day I die."



He had forced back her head and was kissing her fiercely, adoringly. "I love you," he repeated.

"You aren't yourself. This is only a whim. You can't really love me, now that I—"

"Love you? Love can't die, any more than God can die. I couldn't stop loving you if I wanted to. And I don't want to. Dear heart, you can't break our engagement without breaking my heart too."

Her arms stole upward and about his neck, drawing his head down close to her own.

"Oh, my darling! My *darling!*" she whispered, her voice choked with happy sobs. "I never knew—I never dreamed it meant so much to you. If I had, I could never have made you unhappy by going away. Listen, Rex; I want to tell you all about that silly week. And then we'll forget the whole thing. And we'll forget all my absurd notions about people's pasts. It's only the *future*—the future, *together*—that counts. I see that so clearly, now. You've made me see it. I didn't know there *could* be such divine love and trust as yours. I—I feel like kneeling to it. Oh, my own! I must tell you. When I went away, I—"

He laid his hand firmly, tenderly, across her mouth.

"No, dear," he said, "you mustn't tell me. I forbid it. I trust you. And I want to prove I trust you. There is no virtue in trusting, when one *knows*. And I don't want to know. Let the week be locked in your white heart just as other weeks are locked in what you call my 'world-battered heart.' Let's both forget. Let's neither of us confess, *ever*. Is it a compact?"

"Whatever you wish," she sighed blissfully. "Whatever you wish—now and always. But if ever you *will* let me tell—"

"Never!" he said. "Just as you will never again want to ask about any of the things *I'm* trying to forget. Oh, I *love* you!"

IT was late that evening when Rex Duff returned to his rooms. But, late as it was, he did not go to bed before sitting down to scrawl a hurried note. First, addressing an envelope to "Cass Burney, Esq., 'The Elms,' Hampden," he scribbled on a scratch pad:

> It's all right, old man! But how it would have worked out, I don't know, if you hadn't happened in at my office that afternoon with the precious tip that she'd just telegraphed your sister she was "running out to Hampden to spend a week with her and not a soul must know where she was."
>
> I kept the secret, of course—except from Judge Barrison. Being her father, he couldn't be left on tenterhooks a whole week. So after he'd showed me her letter, I told him. But I made him promise to keep mum.
>
> Well, to-night, Thetis telephoned me that she had come back. I went around at once and—

Duff laid down his pen, reached in the desk for a cigarette, lighted it, and then went on writing.

THETIS BARRISON, in her own room, at the same moment, unfastened from her belt a bunch of winter violets, and laid them in front of Rex's silver-framed photograph, as if before a shrine.

"And, after we're married, I *must* tell him," she murmured, "even if he doesn't want me to. It would always hang between us like a cloud. But I wish—oh, I *wish* I hadn't changed my mind. I wish I'd gone to Claire Burney's as I telegraphed her I would!"

ARE you following these stories by Albert Payson Terhune? They are unique. There is one in each month's Red Book, and each story has a power all its own. They do more to make you think about life than all the special articles in the world. In the December issue,—on the news-stands November 23rd,—comes the story of the woman who discovered in the man she had chosen for her second husband all the faults that caused her to divorce her first.



Brother Maddox

Which Tildy?

By Harris Dickson

Author of "Old Reliable," "Sunlover Sam," etc.

WILLIE LUMPKIN believed in the policy of a great diplomat: "When you meet an obstacle, remove it." And in the tale of how Willie put his theory into practice, Judge Dickson has written one of his best stories.

ILLUSTRATED BY B. CORY KILVERT

A STARCHY widow is an enviable thing. Fast black, flat-nosed and chunky—with high-heeled slippers and a mourning handkerchief — Mirandy Patmore wound the draperies of her veil about her, and sailed out on dress parade. Randy's nineteen years of tar-white innocence were not responsible for the envy that she roused. The sight of her put notions in Mamie Meadow's head. Mamie had nothing else in her head, and Randy *was* a sight.

Three months before, as second-assistant scullion, Randy had blushed unseen at a roustabout's lunch-stand. Now she possessed the above named mortuary emoluments, with four hundred dollars cash in bank. Shady finance? No. There wasn't a shady spot on Randy. She married old Gabe Patmore, who promptly shuffled off. His widow lay back languorously in the lead hack, "took on" mightily at the graveside, and scored an enthusiastic success of the funeral. Then she collected Gabe's five-hundred-dollar policy from the Golden Calf Circle of Salubrious Samaritans—after which, female imitators panted to follow in Randy's footsteps.

Willie Lumpkin didn't care who else followed the Patmore example, provided it wasn't Mamie Meadows, whom Willie hungered to obtain. And Willie felt that he had Mamie's promise. All of which accounts for a lowering cloud of apprehension upon the Lumpkin brow, when Mamie came swishing up the street, and foregathered with that Patmore widow.

Admiringly Mamie arranged the dash of white ruching into more striking contrast with Randy's blackness, gave it a loving pat, and stepped back to observe. They chirped and chattered in front of the Spot Cash Eating House, until old Brewster Maddox limped to the door with bushy hair, and a beard that bristled from many ardent combings. Uncle Brewster made goo-goo eyes at Mamie—Mamie with notions about life insurance already buzzing in her head. How could she help soaking up notions? Here was Randy Patmore, the temptatious testimonial; there stood a most eligible and amorous decrepit who carried a Samaritan's policy for five hundred. The situation reeked with suggestion. Even the Lumpkin prejudice conceded that Mamie could be garnished into a sportier-looking widow than the flat-nosed Patmore relict. For Mamie exulted in high-yaller, while Randy toted the handicap of unpalliated black. Willie sweated helplessly from a distance, watching the flirtatious Mamie flaunting her lace fan—for which Willie had paid two dollars—and giggling at Brother Maddox, who had one foot in the grave.

"Brother Maddox!" Uncle Brewster heard that peremptory call from within, a woman's voice; old Sophy Slack, who kept the eating house. Even Sophy's voice seemed angular and gaunt. Brewster ducked and vanished. Mamie switched her skirts, parted from Mirandy and fluttered on.

Willie Lumpkin sauntered across the street and peeped in at the Spot Cash. Uncle Brewster had gone way back to sit down. A raw-boned woman stood, wiping a skillet, and fixing him with her glassy eye—sure defense against the allurements of Mamie Meadows. Brewster's wife? Oh dear, no; Brewster already had a sufficiency of such, and skidded around the edge of further complications. Old Sophy was merely his meal ticket, who fed him at the second table, and furnished the quilt upon which he slept in the woodshed. This made him no object of charity, but rather of faith and hope—Sophy's faith in the Samaritans, and the hope of speedily collecting his five-hundred-dollar policy.

His rival being under competent guard, Willie moodily ascended those dusty steps, which climbed to the office of Enoch Pew. That squint-eyed counselor-at-law was accustomed to having Willie drop in. As a side-line, Willie steered many a client to the cut-rate lawshop, and got a commission on the fee.

"Mr. Enoch, aint dere nary way in de law to chase a nigger out o' town?"

"That depends upon what he has been doing."

Willie blurted out the enormity, "'Spose he's prankin' wid yo' gal?"

Attorney Enoch Pew got both his eyes to working synonymously, then expounded: "In the present status of our judicial system, the law fails to take cognizance, unless the aforesaid hypothetical party should violate the statutes in such case made and provided. *De minimis non curat lex.*"

"Dat's all what I wanted to know." Willie turned. "We's bound to ketch him in some o' dat kind o' meanness."

Willie gathered unto himself a disgust: "Dese rickety nigger men can't git nary policy, widout settin' eve'y woman crazy." Willie also had a policy, but Willie was young and healthy.

IT was the fourth Saturday in November, last chance for Samaritans to pay up; otherwise, their policies became nonfinancial. Elder Templeton Sparr, High Moderator, sat at his door, shining and beaming upon the sheaves which were being gathered. If sheaves had been coming his way any faster, the Moderator's nervous system could not have stood it. He wriggled about in his chair, like a tailless dog, wagging himself all over. With a wave of his shriveled hand Elder Sparr welcomed those who came to be picked and ginned, ushering them along to the High Secretary at the desk. This functionary smiled two dollars' worth each, and issued credentials bearing a red seal.

Again the Moderator bowed more unctuously upon the well-plucked line which filed out to the sidewalk. These were mostly women, jealously anxious that their loved-ones' policies should be kept inviolate. None was more solicitous than big fat Tildy Maddox. Willie Lumpkin glanced towards the Spot Cash,

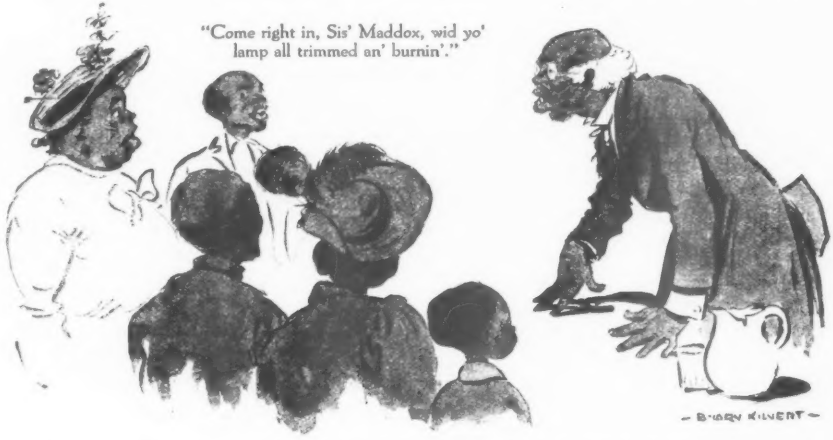
praying that old Sophy might see Uncle Brewster's wife coming to pay his policy. But the Maddox wife and the Maddox meal ticket never saw each other, or there would have been something doing.

Willie pressed close behind Big Tildy as the Moderator greeted her:

"Come right in, Sis' Maddox, wid yo' lamp all trimmed an' burnin'." Sparr's diamond flashed; his white teeth gleamed. "Come in, Sis' Maddox, you jes' is got time to keep Brudder Brewster's policy financial."

Big Tildy propelled herself through the door—it was a wide door. "Brewster aint paid no dues, is he?" she demanded.

Sparr shook his head. "We looks to you fer dem dues, 'cause you gits de money."



"Come right in, Sis' Maddox, wid yo' lamp all trimmed an' burnin'."

Big Tildy crumpled the crowd before her, clearing a way also for Willie, plunked down two dollars, and acquired a red seal on the High Secretary's receipt. "You aint seen Brewster, is you?" she asked.

"No." The Secretary never glanced up, and Sis' Polly thoughtfully informed her: "Brudder Maddox is eatin' at de Spot Cash."

Women's tongues waggled mightily about old Brewster's recent change of habitation, and Sis' Polly itched to see how Big Tildy would take it. The muscles tightened in Tildy's arms. She headed for the door, turning negroes aside like a fourteen-inch plow cutting through high weeds. Willie Lumpkin traveled in her wake, before the furrow closed, and followed Big Tildy to the street, hoping she would proceed to accumulate her husband. But she didn't. An excited neighbor met her. "Tildy, somebody done busted in yo' house, an' left de back do' wide open."

"Lemme go see." Tildy's strong arms opened a path, and she went.

Then the Creeper distracted Willie's fat-faced attention. The Creeper was a quick-stepping, soft-footed constable, who never made a noise, even when clapping the hand of the law upon a criminal's shoulder and whispering, "Come with me." Every negro on Washington Street furtively watched the Creeper, and knew that he was investigating a series of petty burglaries.

The Creeper crept on, and Willie rambled across to the Spot Cash. Old Brewster had moved nearer the front, his restless eyes shifting from Sophie to the door. He was expecting somebody. Willie guessed that the "somebody" was Mamie.

Darkness had come. Lamps were lighted, but never a ray entered the passage which separated the Spot Cash from Maje Jackson's barber shop. This narrow black canyon fetched up at the flightiest sort of a flight of steps by which Willie Lumpkin, if he were careful, could wobble upward to his own room above the barber shop. "I'm p'intedly gwine to see what manner o' devil-

ment dat ole nigger's up to," decided Willie, and the dark canyon absorbed him, except his eyes.

But the thing that happened took place from behind. Somebody came running. As Willie turned, a tall negro thrust a bundle into his hand. "Take dis quick," said the black unknown, and scurried away, dodging around the next corner and leaving Willie with a bag to hold.

Holding a mysterious bag made Willie prudent. Three doors to the north, the Creeper darted across a path of light. Willie faded backwards, and rushed with the bag to his own room. "I don't want to be 'scused o' nothin'," he said to himself.

Placing a chair upon his table, Willie pushed aside a loose board in the ceiling, and hid the plunder. It worried him mightily not to know the nature of his windfall — something soft, and something else that clattered. Willie trod like a cat out of his room, down the steps again, and through the black passageway, to the sidewalk. There he crouched and peeped out. Negroes were hurrying towards the corner. Willie slipped into the crowd, and followed. Behind the corner, Tolly Simms had squatted like a rabbit, shucked his coat, sat down on a doorstep, and lighted a cigarette — all most neatly done before the Creeper arrived.



"Take dis quick," said the black unknown.

The Creeper ran up breathless. "Here, Tolly, see anybody going down the hill?"

"Sho did; nigger passed here mighty swif'."

When Willie craned his neck around the corner of lost trails, the Creeper was circling like a baffled hound. The constable asked no questions, for he was very well aware that the negroes would never tell.

"Well, he got away." The Creeper stuck both hands in his pockets and strolled back to Washington Street.

Willie smarted to know what he had acquired in that hidden sack, but Brother Maddox acted such a suspicious bunch of behavior that it required watching. Sophy stepped into the kitchen. Brewster rambled to the sidewalk, and moved beyond the range of light where Tolly Simms was standing. Willie edged closer, with his ears spread. Brewster Maddox whispered, "Tolly, did you git it?"

"Yes; I give it to Bob in de alley, like you said."

Willie now recognized Tolly as the bag-toter; and Tolly's reputation suggested activities which might be against the peace and dignity of the State of Mississippi.

Willie listened eagerly; Brewster was about to speak again, when Tolly nudged him: "Sh! here comes Tildy."

"Big Tildy, or little Tildy?" Brother Maddox never glanced around.

"Little Tildy."

Brewster turned. *"She!* all right; I'm willin' to hold a civil conversation wid *her."*

A frail, cowed black woman approached hesitantly and halted. Her faded calico dress, neatly ironed, hung straight up and down, with no hint of curves beneath. Little Tildy's hands were very clean, and wrinkled from much dabbling in water. Brewster permitted her to wait. Slowly his mass of hair and whiskers revolved: he turned and towered above the woman. "Brewster," she began apologetically, "here's dat money fer de Samaritans."



"Devoce? Nobody aint spoke no devoce to me."

Those deep-set, scary eyes never lifted as Little Tildy produced a tobacco sack, emptying out her wash-tub earnings in nickles and dimes. Brewster did her the honor to grunt as he deposited two dollars in his pocket: "You come mighty nigh bein' too late; I b'leeves in 'tendin' to bizness when bizness time comes."

"Brewster, how's you feelin'?"

"Po'ly, *mighty* po'ly." And Brewster proved how piteously he could cough. "Dis consumtion is gettin' wuss an' wuss."

Tildy shrank into a point—geometrically defined as position without magnitude—upon the sidewalk. Nobody paid attention to little Tildy; nobody ever did.

Having absorbed her two dollars, Brewster straggled away from the self-effacing woman, as a mule that has come untied from the hitching post. Then he mended his lick, and hurried to where Tolly Simms was argufying with Bob Sawyer. "I *did* give it to you," Tolly insisted.

"Never done no sech thing."

"Warn't you standin' right dar in dat alley-way?"

"No; I aint never got dere yit."

Brewster Maddox thrust his bushiness between them. "What become o' my sack?"

Bob wheeled. "Tolly say I got it—"

Tolly looked puzzled. "I give it to *some*body. Creeper wuz chasin', an' I never axed no questions."

"Dat's what I gits fer goin' an' sendin' a fool—" Brewster could have said more, but Sophy shut him off with, "Come here, Brudder Maddox."

Brewster's bristles fell like a bluffing dog's; he faced the woman because he couldn't help it. She stood in the doorway, angular and erect. "Here, take dese two dollars an' hustle over to de Samaritans. I don't aim to lose five hundred, jes' 'cause you can't remember when time comes to pay dues."

Sophy was a tougher proposition than Little Tildy. If Sophy had been a beefsteak, you couldn't have stuck your fork

in the gravy. Brewster never tarried. He ambled across the street, glancing behind to see when Sophy quit watching. Sophy didn't quit watching, and Brewster didn't quit going. He squirmed amongst the crowd at the Samaritan's door, until Big Tildy blocked him off. She mopped her fat face and panted, "Brewster, somebody done broke in my house an' stole eve'ything you got."

Brewster couldn't even hesitate, for Sophy was still watching; he tried to shove past Tildy and escape. But Tildy was too wide to walk around, and too heavy to push aside. She hung to his coat-tail, protesting: "Send fer Creeper to ketch dat nigger what stole yo' clothes." Brewster twisted like an eel, and squeezed through a narrow space which stopped the bulky woman.

AFTER jerking his tail-feathers loose to get inside, old Brewster had nothing to do—nothing, except squint at Tildy, who was spreading the burglary excitement. Brewster felt temporarily secure, but dared not dally, for Sophy would come over and make pleasure for the crowd. Tildy's back being turned, her husband attempted to slide past. Nobody could steal a base on Tildy. She nailed him, and Brewster began to cough, "Tildy, I jes' wanted to make shore you paid dem dues."

"Don't I always pay 'em? Dat's my onliest chance to git sumpin' out o' you."

Brewster opened up with another nerve-racking paroxysm of coughing. "You'll c'lect dat money mighty soon; I got a gripin' misery in my ches'."

"Shet up 'bout yo' misery. I wants Mr. Creeper to nab dat nigger what busted in my house."

"Never mind him, Tildy; let dat go; I feels turrible bad."

The insides of Tildy Maddox were flabby, and she melted: "Better come home, Brewster, an' lemme take good care o' you."

Brewster moved off a few paces and hung his head. "I aint goin' back to yo' house no mo'; I done got a *de*voce."

"*De*voce?" The huge round woman squared herself: "*De*voce? Nobody aint spoke no *de*voce to me."

"Mr. Enoch Pew put me throo de cote whilst you wuz gone cotton-pickin'."

Brewster's elbow flew out and parried Tildy's under-cut, while he stampeded backwards. Tildy pressed him closer. "Brewster, why didn't you speak up an' 'spress yo'se'f befo'?"

"'Cause I aimed to live peaceable, till I found a place to go."

Tildy planted both hands on her hips—there was plenty of planting room on Tildy's hips—and eyed him scornfully. "Taint nary place fer you to go, 'cept to go out."

"You wouldn't lemme take my clothes."

"Yo' clothes? Who paid fer dem clothes, an' 'lowed you to wear 'em in de peerade? I spent *fo' dollars* fer dat tin s'ode."

"S'odes aint no 'count fer wimmen."

"Twont be no count fer you neither, cause I p'intedly wont let you have it. Now ev'thing is been stole."

THIS diverting side-show upon the pavement interfered with Elder Sparr's main circus within. And, behold! the Moderator came forth to moderate. "Answer sof', Brudder Maddox, answer sof'—an' turn away de wrath."

Tildy couldn't help taking one eye off of Brewster, which gave him a chance to crawfish behind two other big women, and yap like a fice pup through a fence: "My things warn't stole; dey was mine; I sont out an' got 'em."

"Got 'em? Busted in *my* house? I'll show you."

Innocent bystanders blocked off Brewster's retreat. Tildy shook him until his teeth rattled. "Nigger," she declared, "I don't b'leeve you got no devoce."

"I kin prove it; some o' dese days I'll take you up to Mr. Enoch—"

"*Some* o' dese days? We's goin' *right now.*" Tildy wasn't particular which end of Brewster she grabbed. Brewster hated to be dragged; he kept his feet—for the biggest half of the way.

Those fragile steps which led to Enoch Pew's law office trembled at what they saw coming. Big Tildy got behind Brewster, humped herself, and derricked him up.

"Go slow, Tildy, go slow; dese stair-steps is gwine to break."

"Hope dey breaks yo' neck."

With Tildy driving, shoving and pushing him into the presence of Lawyer Pew, Brewster got the first word, "Mr. Enoch—"

"Dry up; *I'm* doin' de talkin'. Mr. Enoch, dis nigger's lyin' to me concernin' of a devoce."

"What might be your name, my good woman?"

"Who? Me? My name's *Tildy Maddox,* an' I don't care *who* knows it. Us is been married two years."

Enoch Pew drummed on his desk, and whistled softly. "It is a matter of record on the Chancery docket that I secured a final decree of divorce in the case of Brewster Maddox versus Matilda Maddox. Is that you?"

"Sho is. How come nobody tole me to 'pear in cote?"

"Because you were temporarily absent from your accustomed domicile. Legal publication was made, and—"

"What's dat?"

"Statutory summons, printed in the newspapers—"

Tildy snorted. "Huh! ef white folks wants to hide sumpin' from niggers, dey sticks it in de newspaper."

"However that may be, service was had according to the statute. Thereupon the court ordered, adjudged and decreed that the bonds of matrimony existing between Brewster Maddox and Matilda Maddox, be and the same are hereby dissolved—"

With one protesting hand Tildy choked off the learned phraseology. "Devoce suits me. I'm powerful proud to git rid o' Brewster. What *I* wants, is to know about dat policy."

Brewster telegraphed a warning to his lawyer. Enoch Pew leaned back and inquired: "What policy?"

"Who gits de Samaritan's five hundred dollars?"

The lawyer's face lighted; it was a most pecuniary face, and this sounded like a fee. "Very well; proceed," he said.

Big Tildy proceeded to proceed: "I tuk out dat policy on Brewster, an' been payin' two dollars jes' reg'lar as de munt rolls round."

The witless Brewster inserted a slice of lip: "Tildy, aint I done tole you—"

"Nigger, dis conversation aint reached you yit." Tildy plumped herself down in a rocking chair to get the professional dope.

Enoch Pew gave it to her, straight: "Whoever is named as beneficiary in that policy will receive the money."

"An' Brewster's devoce don't cut no ice?"

"None whatever, in contemplation of law."

"Dat policy is got *my* name writ on it, 'Matildy Maddox, his wife.'"

"I'll see to the collection for you, and—"

"*I* kin do the collectin'; *I* done de payin'." Tildy's chair squeaked relief when she arose. The outer staircase rocked and swayed like a rope-ladder, as she ponderously descended.

BREWSTER turned from the window as Lawyer Enoch Pew demanded, "Is *that* the woman you were married to?"

"Yas suh, dat's Tildy—plenty of her."

"Then who was the little black woman that consulted me this evening about the same policy?"

"Scrawny 'ooman? Two front teeth knocked out?"

"Yes; said she was your wife."

"Dat's *little* Tildy, what I had befo' dis big Tildy. I must ha' tuk a likin' to de name."

"Which Tildy did you get divorced from?"

Old Brewster eased down into the rocking chair. "I lef' all dat to you, Mr. Enoch," he said.

The lawyer rummaged amongst his files, read several papers, and laid them aside: "Nothing in our bill or decree identifies either woman, except as 'Matilda Maddox, wife of Brewster Maddox.'"

"Dat's proper an' reg'lar, Mr. Enoch. Bofe of 'em is named Tildy; dese here devocement papers ketches 'em goin' forward, an' returnin' back."

"But you had *two* wives, and only got *one* divorce."

Placidly Brewster rocked to and fro. "Mr. Enoch, I does a heap o' ponderin'. Sometimes one o' dem Tildy's pesters me de morest, an' den ag'in its de udder one.

I figgered dat a devoce would wipe out all de tanglements behind a feller, an' start him fresh."

The lawyer sat studying his client, until a glimmer of almost human sympathy came into his skim-milk eyes. "Little Tildy works hard for money to keep up that policy."

"Dat's all paid up; I p'tickler sees to dat. Long as I keeps up my policy, I aint gwine to lack fer nothin'."

"With both these women giving you money to pay dues?"

"No suh, no suh; nary one gives me money, 'cept little Tildy. Big Tildy pays fer herself."

"You keep little Tildy's money, and each of them thinks she's goin' to collect?"

"Wimmens does deir own thinkin', Mr. Enoch."

"Brewster, the first thing you know, none of these women will trust you. That'll throw you out in the cold."

Wise old Brewster settled back and grinned. "Lordee, Mr. Enoch, I'se traveled dis world a heap, mighty nigh to Greenville up yonderway, an' plum to Monroe on de V. S. and P. I aint been nary place yit whar dere warn't two or three wimmen hangin' roun'."

The lawyer forsook all high points of the profession and got down to the gizzard of his contention: "Brewster, I only charged you fifteen dollars for a divorce from *one* wife; double-barreled divorces cost twenty-five."

"Don't dis'n head off de 'ooman what bothers me de wust?"

"What about Sophy Slack paying on your policy?"

At this totally unexpected shot, Brewster jerked himself into a stiff perpendicular. Of course, lawyer Enoch knew; his squinty eyes never missed seeing through a negro affair. Brewster might as well own up: "Mr. Enoch, I *is* kinder skittish o' Sophy; but I'll be dead an' gone; dey kin sputtify widout worryin' me none."

Pew stood up and strutted; then he stopped still, balancing on heel and toe, flapping both coat-tails behind as an indication of subdued excitement. "Brewster," he said awesomely, "you're in a precarious predicament."

"How come, Mr. Enoch?"

"Three women are coming down on you like a thousand of brick, for that policy."

"Dey wont never find out."

"They have discovered you." His voice was low, deep, sepulchral. "And *you don't know which Tildy you are divorced from?*"

Brewster rolled his eyes at the ceiling. "Mr. Enoch, I reckon we'll specify it's de *nighest* Tildy; den spread it a little an' kiver de udder."

Enoch Pew spoke with decision: "Fifteen dollars pays for a single-barreled divorce; you owe me ten dollars. I'll send for Little Tildy, Big Tildy and Sophy Slack to meet you here at eleven o'clock to-morrow. You can compromise with them."

"Lawd Gawd! Mr. Enoch!" Brewster tottered to his feet, with hair and whiskers bushier than a scared cat's tail. "Don't do it; don't *do* it; dat would throw my bizness in a turrible jam."

"Very well, bring me ten dollars."

"Ten dollars."

"Unless you want to argue it out with those three women to-morrow."

"Mr. Enoch, can't you make dat devoce jes' a *leetle* bigger?"



The meal ticket.

"No, but I could apply for another, if I knew which Tildy you are still married to. As to one of them, your litigation is *res judicata—*"

The *res judicata* decided Brewster. "Mr. Enoch, you an' me kin patch up twixt ourselves. Dis tanglement is got me pestered." Brewster Maddox looked more than pestered, as, step by step, he climbed down the creaky staircase. Lawyer Pew blinked his eyes, and smiled at him from the door.

SOPHY was making a grand slam with pans and kettles in the rear of the Spot Cash. Uncle Brewster balked at the door, until the woman had eased her mind. Then she glimpsed him. "Whar you been, ole nigger?"

"Payin' dem dues."

"When *I* sends out two dollars, I wants to see sumpin' come back. Whar's my receipt?"

"Dey never give me none."

"Go back an' git it."

Brewster glanced across the street. "Dem Samaritans is shet up. I'll git it in de mornin'."

"Hear me, Brewster Maddox: fust thing in de mornin', you gits a cup o' coffee; after dat I gits my receipt."

WILLIE LUMPKIN would not risk striking a match. His room was quite dark, except for a faint glow which pulsed in from the river. Again Willie placed a chair on top of the table, pushed aside that loose board in the ceiling, and drew out his concealed treasure. He listened cautiously, dragged the oat-sack to a window and shook out its contents. "Dar now, nothin' but nigger trash—Uncle Brewster's peerade clothes."

Willie had a pretty long head, although it seemed so round and mushy. Far be it from Willie to place obstacles in the path of Uncle Brewster's elimination. He bundled those parade clothes into the sack, and carried them out to the edge of the sidewalk. There he stopped. Inside the Eating House, Sophy was vigorously admonishing Brother Maddox: "No batter cakes to-morrer, an no gravy; neither no place to sleep, till you puts dat receipt in my hand."

Willie chuckled to himself, "Brewster can't git nary receipt, and Sophy's gwine to lambast him till he hits de big road."

Sophy's wrath simmered to a sputter before Willie considered it safe to beckon, and then to whisper, "Uncle Brewster, here's yo' clothes."

"Whar'd you git 'em?"

"Tolly give 'em to me; I didn't know dey was yourn."

Old Brewster reached for the sack with a precautionary glance through the window at Sophy. "Willie,"—he pointed down the alley,—"take dese back to yo' room an' hide 'em. I'm skeered to put 'em in my wood-shed. Sophy is a powerful nosey 'ooman."

NEXT morning when Attorney Enoch Pew opened his front door, he heard the tap, tap, tapping of Willie Lumpkin at the rear. They communed together and conferred, as per engagement. Lawyer Pew consented to these negotiations, hoping thereby to twist another ten spot out of Brewster Maddox. Willie designed the proceedings to scare his rival out of town. The conferees separated, and each pursued his private end.

After his morning cup of coffee, Brewster Maddox shied away from the Eating House—where he did no eating. Willie hailed him with glad tidings of great joy. "Lawyer Pew is got eve'ything framed up to settle yo' bizness. Dem Tildies is comin' at 'leven o'clock, wid Aunt Sophy. You'll be dere, an—"

"Not me."

"Dey'll 'gree 'bout dat policy: eve'ything'll be nice an' pleasant."

"Dey kin be pleasant 'mongst deyselves; I aint a-gwine."

"Mr. Enoch is yo' lawyer; you'll hafter go—*ef you stays in town.*"

Brewster looked all around him. "Vicksburg aint fenced in. Furthermo', dese wimmen carries on too much foolishness to suit me."

The leaven of departure was working, and Willie stirred it. "Three wimmen couldn't chase me off, not wid a sharp lawyer to back me up."

Uncle Brewster took a bracer. "I'll be dar at 'leven o'clock, an' git my bizness fixed." That cunning light in the old man's eyes never deceived Willie Lumpkin.

"Dat's de way fer a *man* to talk!" Willie started off and stopped. "I sho is comin' to see you squelch dem wimmen. Mamie Meaders say she wouldn't miss it fer nothin'."

"Hol' on, Willie; whar'd you put dem clothes o' mine?"

"Dey's hid. I'll git 'em fer you, soon as I fetches Mamie."

Brewster's hair and whiskers bristled as he clung to Willie's elbow. "Whar'd you hide my clothes?"

"In dat sack, under my bed."

Willie strolled away, whistling, until he had turned the corner. Then he swapped music and inadvertence for a swift dead run, through the alleys. Being swift of foot he gained the shoemaker's shop, opposite the Spot Cash, before Brewster Maddox appeared on the block. Brewster dodged from doorway to doorway, keeping inside whenever Sophy poked her nose out of the Spot Cash.



"'Peared like he aimed to arrive somewhar mighty brief."

As Sophy turned back to cook a customer's breakfast, Brewster darted out of the barber shop, ducked into the passage, and climbed nervously to Willie Lumpkin's room.

THE Law, even more vigilant than Love, had also been spying upon the suspicious maneuvers of Brewster Maddox. The Creeper crept, and the Creeper waited. Willie Lumpkin witnessed his threatened ambush, but couldn't send a warning. With the bag in his hand, Brewster came sneaking through the alley. He never heard Creeper until that soft-stepping officer touched his shoulder with, "What yo' got in yo' sack?"

"Nothin', boss, 'cept my clothes."

"Show me."

Brewster heard Sophy's quick step marching towards the front; he started to run. Creeper pinned him. "Fo' Gawd's sake, Mr. Creeper, don't stan' in my road; I'm *'bleeged* to leave."

"Open that sack."

"Yas suh." Brewster's nervous fingers fumbled with the string. Sophy popped out on the sidewalk, like a devil's horse. Brewster scrambled behind the constable: "Mr. Creeper, I aint goin' to tell you no lie. I *stole* dem things. I stole 'em. Take me 'long wid you."

Under legal escort and protection, Uncle Brewster hustled up the hill, toting his bag towards the jail, while the rear-guard constable stood between him and Sophy's lashing tongue.

MIRANDY PATMORE loved to be viewed, in all the frailties and fripperies of bereavement. So too did Mamie Meadows, minus black veil and white ruching, but possessed of a lace fan and a yearning. Although they chirped and chattered together in front of the Spot Cash, no aged lover came to provide the pomp and paraphernalia of widowhood. Mamie wasted smiles upon a stupid country nigger, sitting in his wagon at the curb. Willie Lumpkin sauntered along and stopped, without apparent intention. All of which irritated Mamie.

Eleven o'clock had arrived. Lawyer Enoch Pew searched the street for the client that had not come.

"Willie," he asked, "have you seen Brewster Maddox?"

Mamie stuck up both ears. Willie drew the lawyer to one side and whispered, scarce loud enough for Mamie to hear, "Uncle Brewster is been tuk to jail. Creeper jugged him fer bustin' in dese houses."

Mamie held her breath for details.

"Good!" Lawyer Pew started off in a hurry. "I'll go up to the jail and confer with him"—for a conference meant a fee.

That stupid negro on the wagon had just arrived from Blakely, eight miles to the north. Naturally, he thirsted for city news, and was proud to contribute. Mamie heard him plainly. "Mister, does you-all speak concernin' of Brudder Brewster Maddox?"

"Yes." The lawyer wheeled.

"Brudder Maddox aint in no jail: I seed him more'n a hour ago."

Mamie's curiosity drew her closer: Willie kept his head turned and smiled inwardly. Enoch Pew made the strictly business inquiry. "Where did you see him?"

"Nigh 'bout King's Crossing—walkin' de railroad. 'Peared like he aimed to rive somewhar mighty brief. Never looked to de right, nor yit to de lef'. Jes' kep' a-goin'—wid a bundle on his back."

"Did he seem troubled about anything?"

"I never seed his face—jes' glimpsed de souf' end of him, whilst he was travellin' north."

When the Devil Was Sick —

By Hale Dann

IT isn't always well to give youngsters what they want. For instance, this one—he was still a youngster, though a full-grown man—wanted his nurse for his wife.

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES DEAN CORNWELL

ROSS KING re-read the telegram he had just received, regarding it with a distinctly unenthusiastic eye. It read as follows:

MR. ROSS KING,
Superior Building, Duluth, Minn.
Laid up in Samaritan Hospital, Chicago. Have just decided to marry my nurse. Doctors say I will recover.
WILMER.

Ross King was not surprised to learn that his younger brother was in a hospital. Wilmer had a habit of turning up in unexpected places. Of course he was glad to learn that the doctors had hopes of recovery, but he had a suspicion that the medical men were not treating him for the nurse.

Ross had an important case up for trial that morning and he had little time to worry about his brother. Therefore he dictated a telegram and left the office.

The message read:

MR. WILMER KING,
Samaritan Hospital, Chicago, Ill.
Do you need any help?
ROSS.

This was a customary routine with them. Wilmer got into trouble and told Ross about it. Ross with greater or less reluctance pulled him out of it and covered up the tracks. Orphans since boy-

hood, the older brother had stood *in loco parentis* to the youngster—and Wilmer would have taxed the resources of a reform school to keep him entirely free from trouble. From every escapade into which his fertile brain had led, the steady hand of Ross King had extricated him. Ross had fixed it up with the authorities at the University that time they had been so unaccountably peeved about the matter of the marble statue of the founder in the swimming tank. On another occasion he had furnished the necessary bail when a friendly bar-room row had developed to such proportions that the police had taken a hand. Later he had financed a trip to Europe while time sprinkled ashes on the scandal that followed.

It had always seemed natural for the older man to make excuses for the younger and to repair the damage the younger left in his wake. Nature had designed them for their respective rôles in life. Ross was tall and gaunt, with a shade of red hair that to some people seemed hideous and to others wonderfully beautiful, depending on how well you knew him. There were freckles on his capable hands, too, and his feet were plenty large enough for a couple of ordinary men. Altogether, his physique was not nearly so ornamental as it was useful.

Wilmer, on the other hand, had been among those present when good looks were being passed around. Not nearly so large as his brother, he was more gracefully built and had the sort of soft dark hair that women always seem to want to run their fingers through. In Wilmer's case they did. The fact caused him a great deal of trouble at times, which he had invariably shifted to the shoulders of his brother. In that way Ross had come to know a great deal about love—vicariously. By listening to and sympathizing with his brother's ex-lady-friends he learned more of the science of philandering than he possibly could have picked up by personal experience in the limited amount of time that he could spare from his law practice.

WHEN Ross returned from court



"But," protested Wilmer, "he has got to talk to you before it is too late."

more or less ruffled by a technical battle with a colleague at the bar, he found another telegram on his desk:

MR. ROSS KING,
Superior Building, Duluth, Minn.
Thanks for offer to help. Come at once. She refuses to marry me.
WILMER.

Grimly the lawyer wired the following:

MR. WILMER KING,
Samaritan Hospital, Chicago, Ill.
You were born lucky.
ROSS.

Several hours later a telegram followed him from the office to his club, where he was dining with a friend and client.

MR. ROSS KING,
Superior Building, Duluth, Minn.
You unfeeling pup. She has to read my telegrams to me and you have hurt her feelings. If you could only see her brown eyes.
WILMER.

Ross read that and then continued his dinner. His friend wondered why he had suddenly become so pessimistic in his outlook on life. The lawyer went home early and retired without sending any further message. He felt that he was doing his brother a great favor by remaining silent, as he could think of a great many things he might say.

To the office next forenoon came a telegram.

MR. ROSS KING,
Superior Building, Duluth, Minn.
Brother sinking rapidly after operation. Come at once.
SUPERINTENDENT,
Samaritan Hospital.

SLIGHTLY dazed by the serious termination of what he had regarded as a trivial affair, Ross King caught a train that landed him in Chicago at midnight.

At the hospital a white-clad interne told him of his brother's condition.

"He doesn't seem to rally as we expected. If there were only some great interest to arouse him to make a struggle for himself he might have a chance. As it is, he doesn't seem to care, and a case in that condition is hopeless."

Ross stepped into the private room where his brother lay. Over the electric bulb on the wall a heavy green cloth had been tied so that the light would not bother the man on the bed. To Ross' unaccustomed eyes everything seemed blurry at first, from the splotches that represented the furniture to the vague outline in white which doubtless was the nurse.

The figure approached him inquiringly and barred his progress to the bedside.

"You are—"

"His brother," Ross supplied in a low tone to match her own.

She stood aside.

"That you, Ross?" said a weak voice from the bed.

"Yes." The older man stood beside him and picked up the thin fingers in his own large hand.

"I knew it would be all right if you would come. Nobody can resist you."

"What do you mean?" questioned Ross, puzzled.

"The nurse."

"What?" exclaimed the brother in astonishment. "Where does she come in?"

"I wired you about her," the other explained weakly. "She wont agree to marry me, but you can fix it up. You can always make people do things even when they don't want to. Nurse," he called, "this is my brother, Ross King. He has come all the way from Minnesota just to convince you that you are wrong. Don't make him argue too long because his time is worth about a dollar a minute."

"That matter will keep," suggested Ross, "until you are feeling better. What can I do for you right now? Is there anything I can get?"

"No," petulantly from the invalid.

"You will have to stop talking, Mr. King," interposed the nurse firmly. "It's against the doctor's orders. Your brother may stay here, but conversation is forbidden, at least until to-morrow."

"But," protested Wilmer, "he has got to talk to you before it is too late."

"Sh," soothed the nurse, putting a practised hand on his forehead.

"Step into the hall with me please, Nurse," requested Ross in a tone that was a cross between annoyance and anx-

iety. He went out into the corridor and paced up and down the cork carpeted floor until she joined him a few moments later.

IN the darkness of the sick room he had not been able to see her distinctly, and now he scrutinized her features closely. He had rather expected to find a florid, husky beauty with bold, defiant eyes. Instead, he discovered that she was a slender little woman with a tired droop at the corner of her mouth, and soft eyes which seemed a little frightened of him.

She was no beauty; that was certain; but there was something about the eyes and mouth that made him know that when she did smile it was worth waiting for.

Just now they regarded each other curiously for a few moments without speaking.

Finally the man began, "My brother is dying."

"Yes," she admitted with just a suspicion of a break in her voice, as if a tear had someway got into the machinery by accident.

He looked at her sharply. "Do you care?" he demanded.

"Of course," she replied simply. "I always care."

"Always? Then you feel no different toward him than any other patient?"

She considered it thoughtfully. "No, except that he is so young."

Ross kept searching her eyes for a trace of scheming self-interest. As an attorney he was accustomed to reading in the eyes what the lips concealed. In the depths of hers he found nothing but pity.

"He has fallen in love with you."

"He thinks he has. Nine men out of ten are that way when they are ill. When they recover they forget."

"At any rate, he wants to marry you."

"Yes."

"He thinks you refused him."

"I have."

"Why? What difference would it make?" In spite of himself he found that he was arguing for his brother. She was silent for a few minutes.

"What difference does it make?" she repeated. "What sort of a heart do you think I've got, to let myself become attached to something I can't have. I am an orphan: I never had anything in all my life that was my very own, no father or mother, not even a cat that cared more for me than anything else in the world. For a long time I went around putting little tags of affection on people and things about me, but they always went away and lost their tags, so now I am selfish. As nobody else ever protects me from being hurt, I have to protect myself. What if I should humor this passing fancy of your brother's? What would your family think of it? What would he do himself after he got well? Simply make every effort to get rid of me. Think of my training compared to that of the family into which he would introduce me. What would they say?"

"They would say that they approve very heartily of their brother's judgment." He found himself saying this against the admonitions of a legal mind which cautioned, "Go slow! Don't be rushed off your feet!"

"Nonsense. How can you speak for the entire family?"

"Because I am it. We have no relatives nearer than cousins, and anything they have to say about our affairs can be thrown in the waste basket."

She laughed softly. "That's all very well, but you have forgotten that telegram."

"I hadn't seen you," he retorted quickly with a tongue long unaccustomed to compliments. "Look here, young woman," he went on in a paternal tone, "ever since we were boys I have always tried to get my brother whatever he wanted. For some reason or other he wants you. He may live only a few days and I want him to be happy as long as he lasts. You have nothing to lose. Wouldn't you like to have a home?"

"Didn't I tell you I was an orphan? A home is what I've dreamed of ever since I can remember—a home with lots of little corners to dust out and a basement full of canned strawberries and coal and soap powder, and an attic where you can put the pictures of the relatives you don't care much about anyway and the trunks full of old clothes and shoes. Why, I'd trade any heaven I ever heard

about for the tiniest home in the world."

"Then I advise you to accept. I even insist upon it." He took out his watch and looked at it as if he were giving an opponent a certain length of time to make a decision. "It will make him easier in his mind, and as a nurse you owe it to your patient to do everything possible to make him comfortable. Come, we'll go in and tell him it's all right."

She bowed her head thoughtfully. "Whatever you think is best—but I warn you that I fear you will have to pay dearly."

He shut his watch with a snap. "You can name your own price."

He led the way back into the room.

IT took Wilmer King six weeks to get well. The doctor who attended him seemed to regard his recovery as rather an unfair criticism upon his judgment, but he grudgingly admitted that for some unknown reason his patient had suddenly acquired tremendous vitality and active interest in existence.

Until all danger of a serious crisis was passed, the elder brother stayed in Chicago, but when recovery was certain he went home, leaving Wilmer in charge of the competent young woman whose name he learned was Nurse



"What sort of heart do you think I've got, to let myself become attached to something I can't have?"

Eileen Franklin. He picked up his interrupted law practice to find that his attention was constantly distracted from business by the memory of a pair of brown eyes and a tired smile. He told himself that he had been hypnotized, that he had been deceived by a uniform, and that if he were to meet her on the street in ordinary clothes he would not even see her. But the recollection persisted. For once in his life his inner consciousness approved his brother's taste.

WHEN word came from the hospital that Wilmer could be moved, Ross decided that the best place for convalescence would be a fishing camp on the shores of the lake, which he and several friends maintained for glorified roughing it during the summer months. The word *camp* did not apply to the collection of buildings which constituted the retreat any more than *shack* is descriptive of some of the summer palaces in the Adirondacks. There were bath-rooms strewn all over the place, and you could not turn around without running into some modern electrical convenience widely advertised in the popular magazines.

The "camp" would not be in active operation for a month yet, so Ross, with the permission of the other owners, sent a crew of domestics up there to get it ready to be a temporary sanitarium. He arranged with an obliging woman friend whose husband was a traveling man, anyway, to transfer her residence to the camp for the time being and act as chaperon for the engaged couple. He himself planned to motor out from town every evening and stay overnight. Altogether, it seemed an ideal arrangement to promote health and premarital felicity.

ROSS met his brother and Miss Franklin at the train. She wore a nurse's street uniform. This rather strengthened his suspicion that maybe she did not look well in ordinary clothes.

Wilmer had the interesting pallor of an invalid; he was rather thin and weak, but he had recovered a good deal of his old time spirit and careless charm. Ross noticed that he seemed to take the girl's attentive devotion as a matter of course, and when he addressed her used terms of endearment as casually as do married people of long standing.

At the camp, Eileen was ingenuously delighted with everything. To Ross fell the task of showing her the various natural advantages and explaining how all the modern ones worked.

At last, seated on the veranda, he asked, "How would you like a home like this after you are married?"

She was silent. He looked up at her curiously to see why she did not answer. She was blinking her eyes rapidly but with only partial success. A tear fell out of one of them and rolled down her cheek.

"Why, what on earth's the matter, youngster?" he demanded with quick sympathy.

"Nothing at all," she replied with a shining smile that banished the tears. "It was just the way you spoke about things as if they were established facts. To me, heaven and home have always been sort of imaginary places where you might possibly go after you were too old to get any fun out of them, if in the meantime you never did one single thing you wanted to."

She got up and went to the rustic rail of the veranda.

"Doesn't it smell nice here!" she exclaimed, taking in a full breath of pine-laden air. "I had almost forgotten that there were places in the world where there wasn't any odor of formalin or carbolic acid."

WILMER recovered with astonishing rapidity. Soon he and his nurse were able to take walks through the spring livened forest and even drive into town occasionally. Eileen still clung to her uniform despite the protests of the two brothers.

"Until you are quite well," she insisted, "I shall keep my job. After that we shall see."

Quite naturally, with Wilmer's convalescence, some of his old friends from the city took occasion to run out for a call or to spend the evening. Both of the King brothers were popular in their own way, and sometimes two or three motor

parties would make the camp an objective point during an evening.

The younger brother was frankly glad of the diversion. He had missed the society of his fellow men and more particularly his fellow women. Being a lady's man is a vice which must be practiced continuously or the victim becomes irritable.

When Wilmer would go for a stroll in the moonlight with one of the girls from town, Ross was frankly apologetic to his brother's fiancée. She, however, showed no feeling in the matter and seemed to take Wilmer's lapses as a matter of course. Ross always attempted to amuse her in such cases and to shield her from any evidence of the younger man's neglect. Sometimes when he had made a special effort to cover up the younger man's tracks he would find her looking at him with a funny, quizzical smile. When he demanded to know the cause of her amusement she evaded him with a promise to tell some time.

AT last Wilmer pronounced himself in perfect health and refused to be treated as an invalid any longer. He made that statement at breakfast one morning.

"Then I can consider myself officially discharged," said Eileen quietly.

"Why yes—" began Wilmer.

"Discharged as a nurse, yes," put in Ross hastily, "but retained forever as a member of the family."

"Of course that's what I meant," acquiesced the younger man. Then dropping the subject hastily, he went on, "I think we will have a party to-night to celebrate my being my own man again. A sort of a coming-out affair, as it were. Does that sound reasonable to you, Ross?"

"Surest thing you know," agreed the lawyer heartily. "We will make it a coming-out party for Eileen, too. Breaking out of the cocoon so to speak. To-night she will lay aside the nurse's uniform for the first time."

"Very well," she assented quietly.

"If you like," suggested Ross, struck with a sudden thought that possibly she might not have any other clothes, "you can come into town with me and pick up a gown or two that will do until you can get some made."

"I have plenty of clothes, thank you," she said with a demure smile for his ever-ready thoughtfulness.

Wilmer and Ross made out a list of the people they wanted to invite to their impromptu party, and Ross agreed to telephone all the invitations from his office.

THE guests arrived before Eileen came down from her room. Dinner had been announced when she descended the staircase.

Her arrival was greeted with a momentary hush of astonishment abruptly succeeded by a well-bred effort on the part of everybody to talk at once in order to cover the rudeness of their astonished stares.

Eileen was clad in a waist and skirt which had been designed for a shop-girl's holiday in the period of ten years before, and had subsequently suffered considerably from various efforts to remodel it into the fashion of the hour. The waist was decorated with a lot of cheap lace and had many bits of ruching in the wrong places. The neck, which was cut a trifle low, fitted fairly well across the front but came out to a slight point in the back, where it had been hung on a nail in the closet. The skirt was of approximately the same vintage, although some one, presumably a one-armed butcher, had converted it into an imitation of the modern close-fitting model which hiked up coquettishly in the back and sagged dispiritedly in the front.

Wilmer took one look and turned hastily away, leaving in view only his ears, which gradually became red while he chatted wildly with the young woman who happened to be nearest.

ROSS started to smile, then quickly smothered it as he gravely proceeded to the foot of the stairs and offered Eileen his arm. "I am to take you out to dinner," he said, hastily rearranging in his mind his original plans for partners. He felt that it would never do to leave her to anyone's else care in that costume. Acutely sensitive to ridicule himself, his

impulse was to shield her from it at all costs.

She was very quiet during the meal. Conversation on her part was superfluous anyway. Her clothes spoke for her, simply yelled, in fact. Ross, however, on his part talked as he never had before, thus attracting all the attention possible to himself. When he really was wound up he could speak interestingly on almost any subject, and this evening he outdid himself.

The strain came to an end at length. Even the longest dinners get themselves eaten in the course of time. It had been planned that the entire party should motor to a neighborhood club, where arrangements for dancing had been made by telephone.

WHILE the ladies were getting their wraps Wilmer asked his brother to step out on the veranda.

"What shall I do, Ross?" he demanded.

"Do?" returned his brother with feigned misunderstanding. "About what?"

"About Eileen. I can't marry her."

"Why not?"

"Why not? Great Scott, man, where are your eyes? Haven't you any sense of humor? She simply wont do, that's all. Can you imagine a human being thinking she was properly dressed in the costume she had on to-night?"

"What difference does it make what a person wears? Think of the hours she spent taking care of you."

"Well, we can pay her for that, can't we?" The younger brother paced up and down feverishly. "I tell you I wont stand it. I can't stand it."

"You selfish pup!" Ross seldom spoke angrily to the boy for whom he felt in a way responsible, but now for an instant his temper got the better of him. "Don't you ever think of anything but your own comfort?"

"Yes I do," the other retorted. "I am thinking of her comfort too. If I feel this way about her she would be very foolish to marry me, and you know it. It is just one of those things that can't be helped."

"Can't be helped?" echoed the lawyer blankly. "What are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know. I know it sounds ungrateful, and I remember that I thought differently once, but surely no man with our training could marry a girl who lacks as much as she does."

"Yes, he could," Ross insisted.

"If you think she's so nice, why don't you marry her yourself?"

"I would if I could."

"What?"—incredulously.

"Yes. I've always cared more for her than you, even when you thought you cared most, but that doesn't make any difference, because you are the one she loves."

The younger brother walked in silence for a moment.

"That makes it worse. I don't know what to do," he confessed at length. "I suppose I ought to save you from her but I don't know how."

"Don't worry," said Ross drily. "No one ever has to save me from women. Freckles and red hair are a great safeguard."

"Don't make me laugh," was the other's comment. "If I were a girl I'd never let up until I had you lassoed. We wont say anything more about it until to-morrow. I'll see if I can't see some way out of it. Here comes the bunch for the dance. We'll have to be getting on our way."

A dozen of the party came out ready for the ride. Eileen was not among them. Ross volunteered to wait for her and come later, and so the rest departed, Wilmer among them.

HE went into the library, where there was a fire built in the big fireplace, and thought soberly of this last disgrace that his brother had got himself into. Here was something that money could not repair, and he could think of no way of explaining diplomatically to a sensitive girl why his brother had suffered such a sudden change in his affections.

A slight cough at the door aroused him. He turned in his easy-chair to see who was there.

It was Eileen, but an Eileen that he had never seen before. She seemed enveloped in a soft gray mist. After a few



A slight cough at the door aroused him. It was Eileen, but an Eileen he had never seen before.

seconds of incredulous staring, he realized that she had on a more wonderful gown than any he had ever seen in all his life. Simple, and a wee bit old fashioned in its softness and cut, it was an absolutely perfect setting for her wistful style of beauty.

"Am I all right now?" she queried demurely, hesitating with downcast eyes at the door.

"Why—you—are perfect."

Ross in some way stumbled to his feet.

"Then—then may I come in and sit down?"

He silently offered her a chair opposite his own.

All at once he seemed tongue-tied. If it had seemed difficult to tell the old Eileen of his brother's defection, it was doubly so to mention so crass a matter to this radiant young woman of the world, whom he felt that he had scarcely met.

"Well," she prompted at last, smiling at him encouragingly, "what have you to say to me?"

"There *was* something, but I can't think," he admitted.

"You weren't so tongue-tied during dinner," she suggested naïvely. "I never knew a man could talk so much, but I suppose maybe lawyers are better at it than most people."

THEY sat in silence for a few moments; then she rose. "Well, I must be going, then," she said. "I thought surely you would have something to say to me, and I am dreadfully disappointed."

He rose also. "What," he demanded in questioning embarrassment, "did you think I was going to say to you?"

"I thought—" she began, hesitatingly while she smoothed out an imaginary wrinkle in her skirt, "—from what you said to your brother, that you were going to ask me to marry you."

"From what I said to my brother," he repeated. "Did you hear that? Where were you?"

"I was sitting on the veranda all the time."

"Great Scott!" He put his hand on his forehead, trying to think what he had said.

"Of course if you didn't mean it—" She started away.

He took a step towards her. "Do you mean that you would accept me as a substitute for Wilmer? Take a good look at me before you answer and don't overlook the fact that my hair is an awful shade of red and that I would never take any prizes for looks even if all the judges happened to be picked from an insane asylum."

"I have looked at you a good many times, Ross King," she said with her eyes level, direct in his, and her slow smile turning up the corners of her mouth, "and I have seen something I wanted every time I have looked."

"But Wilmer—"

"Oh, I knew I would never marry him, a long time ago."

"You did? When?"

"Why, the first time I saw you."

A little later, while he was waiting for her to re-arrange her hair, he asked casually: "How about this dress? Where did you get a marvel such as nobody in this section of the country has never seen before?"

"Oh, this little thing," she replied airily, indicating the imported creation he had done his best to spoil, "this is a little thing I bought with all the money I could save in two years. They say I have excellent taste in clothes. Cheer up, Ross; it's a lucky thing you are a successful lawyer."

A Black Crow

By Ida M. Evans

MISS EVANS in this story sees into the heart of a man who hates his boss, his life—everything. It is a story as unusual as her "Virginia."

ILLUSTRATED BY F. V. POOLE

DISDAINFULLY Mr. Henry Bartholly surveyed Albert Pickens.

For support and background to this superior attitude, Mr. Bartholly had: a swivel chair, four parts Spanish mahogany to three parts tufted leather; a wholesale grocery house whose paper - flower - and - Tungsten - bulb - float brightened every civic parade of his town; a pursy abdomen protected and adorned by a white, satin-dotted piqué waistcoat; a series of portly, corrugated, Khaki-hued chins that lapped and overlapped each other like the billowish oozings of a suet pudding that has burst its muslin bag; and a Romanesque profile that every newspaper in town kept, photo-engraved, ready for instant front page use.

In addition, Bartholly was smoking a long, cinnamon-complexioned cigar whose red and yellow band represented exactly one-tenth of Pickens', weekly wage.

Pickens, standing irresolutely in the doorway, had no support or background except the unsentient atmosphere of Bartholly's outer office at his back, where a secretary and two stenographers were absorbed in driving fountain pen and platens at full speed.

Pickens was a tall, shabby man. He had the irresolute tallness of a wind-wabbled weed. And his shabbiness was that offending variety which has soaked from garb to spirit, and evinces itself in a vacuous iris and a pendulous lower lip. Pickens' head was high and narrowly round—like a peanut. His hair and eyebrows were the color of peanut shells. His face was long and narrowly flat. By nature, his joints hung loosely. He had never got hold of the food or the environment needed to tighten joints.

Under the other's disdain, he wabbled visibly—like a lifeless weed under an October wind.

"If you aint got a lot of cheek!" Bartholly ejaculated, sliding the cigar to the left corner of his large mouth. "Coming up here wanting to know why I cut your wages! After I've pasted notices all over the building that retrenchment was necessary! Aint that enough explanation?"

Abashedly Pickens shifted his long, loose weight from one long, loose foot to its shabby mate. He gave the retort courteous from employee to employer. "Y-yes, sir." And then, unexpectedly, the gas of sullenness slit slightly the years-blown balloon of abashment. "Only—sir—only—" stuttered Pickens.

"Only!" Bartholly's corrugated chins heaved with anger. "Only!" he roaringly mimicked. "Only what? That aint enough, it seems!"

Pickens' long, loose throat swallowed something. Sullen gas, perhaps.

Bartholly folded his fat hands over his fat abdomen, leaned back in his tufted chair and said nastily: "Well, I aim to be fair to you men. I like to satisfy folks. And so, though I don't have to, I'll just spare a few minutes of my time and give you a longer explanation."

For greater facility in explaining, he removed the cigar and laid it on the desk. Pickens waited.

"I could," sneered Bartholly, "parley along about the tariff revision and the influx of cheap foreign labor, and the



"If you aint got a lot of cheek! Coming up here wanting to know why I cut your wages."

infernal rebate mess, and interstate commerce regulations, and other matters which are about as intelligible to you as New Thought to a garter snake. But I'll get right down to meat that you can chew. The fact is, Pickens, you are a fool—" He paused to let the consoling news sink deep into the other's brain, picked up the cinnamon colored cigar and blew a cloud of its fragrant smoke ceilingward. Pickens wabbled in the doorway. Disdainfully Bartholly added:

"—or you wouldn't be in your class. And the real and only reason that I can cut your wages and you've got no right to ask why, is because—and stupid as you are, you know it—any minute of any day, I can get a hundred men to do for nine dollars what you've been half-doing for eleven.

"In this world, every man gets what he's worth. And if another man will do the work for a dollar less, why, the first aint worth the dollar more. Packers aint geniuses, y'know, nor white crows. And I never yet met one so trustworthy that you didn't have to keep a checker at his heels. That's all. Get out."

Pickens shambled out.

The first stenographer, a dapper, oldish woman whose frivolously pink-glazed fingernails belied a thin, clever mouth, murmured worriedly, "The wind's in the northeast this morning, all right, all right."

The second stenographer, a dapper, youngish woman whose school-teachery neatness of attire belied a pair of bold, baby-blue eyes, typed with apprehensive haste, and murmured in return, "Betcher life it is."

The secretary, a young man of pale, frail hands and paler cheeks, bestowed upon Pickens' retreating, shambling shoulders a glance that was scornfully pitying.

Along the corridor outside, Pickens shambled. His weak lower lip pouched itself viciously. "'Taint fair," he muttered.

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A BLACK CROW

SOME medical men assert that the germ of pneumonia may be found in every adult mouth, snuggled in tooth-recess or gland. Providing the adult is careful and wise, eats what he should instead of what he would, keeps out of drafts and wears rubbers when it rains, a germ may snuggle in innocuous quiescence till it dies of a germ's old age.

But if any untoward condition worries that germ from its slumber till it sits up and takes notice that the place is comfortable but lonesome, there is a hurry-up call for friends and relatives from Germville, who respond by the billion, and another human is immediately packed in ice.

Some criminologists — and some humanitarians — assert that the germ of murder lurks in each soul which is put, blubbering, out of the infinite into the finite for its three score years and ten of travail.

If your grandfathers and grandmothers were all they ought to be in such matters as stomach lining, will and morality, and you yourself marry the right woman,—or man,—acquire beautiful, dutiful, children who do not fret you, possess the wherewithal to transform café waiters into apartment-house owners, never make a trust unless the White House wants one, and refuse the acquaintance of inflammatory rheumatism, your murder-germ dies of maltreatment.

But if you're poor and ugly and scrawny and hungry and febrile-willed, that germ fattens, and twelve of your peers are greatly annoyed by being dragged from their daily pursuits to discuss you.

Pickens had hated Bartholly and all other prosperous people for a long time, ever since an older brother, over-liquored and avaricious, had kicked him, seven years old, orphaned, underfed and cowed, to a newspaper route, and coolly pocketed the earnings.

However, it had been a dull, apathetic hatred, no more to be feared by society at large than the recalcitrancy of a poor old tuberculous steer at the stockyards, which is about to be translated into tinned turkey. It was a corroding hatred, and it made him miserable. But he no more understood his misery than a carp, flung on the sun-blazed sand by a disappointed fisherman who wanted trout, can understand the why or wherefore of the agony which the merciless sun burns from its dull, upstaring eyes. Pickens grew up, worked apathetically, acquired a wife unhopefully, several children hopelessly, worked ineffectually for them and himself, and merely whimpered at life and life's injustice. The only tangible result of whimpering in this world is a flabby, shiftless lower lip.

Still, even a flabby, saggy lower lip may become rigid when it has been jabbed by a poison-tipped pin, and inflammation has set in. Though Bartholly had not intended any such result, his sneering had been a poisoned pin to Pickens' flabby spirit. And though Bartholly did not know it—and never would—his words had jabbed Pickens' flabby, weak hatred, and inflamed it poisonously, and made it dangerous.

"'Taint fair!" It was not a whimper. It was a yap, as Pickens shambled onward.

"WATCH where you're going, my man!" The voice was as tinkling-sweet as a piano's higher keys.

Pickens swerved to avoid collision with a handsome, white-haired, white-gowned woman who had stepped from the passenger elevator at the first turn of the corridor. She was middle-aged, but it was not the unlovely middle age that Pickens knew in the women of his class—that age of stiff joints, shapeless form, bent shoulders, dull, cold eyes or dull, irritable eyes, mottled, lined skin and stringy, graying hair—such middle age as Mrs. Albert Pickens, just then rubbing gaunt, unlovely knuckles up and down a washboard, presented.

This woman was lithely erect. A corsetière saw to that. She was lissome and supple-jointed. A masseuse saw to that. Her white hair and white, aristocratic face were as fragrantly lovely as apple-blossom petals drifting on the ground of the orchard. Such are old, as petals go, and the pink that the twigs knew has been faded by wind and rain, but they are white things of scented beauty, nevertheless.

At the nape of Mrs. Henry Bartholly's lovely white neck a platinum-and-brilliant bar held her lovely white hair in order. That bar was worth exactly what Pickens drew in three paydays. He stared bitterly after it. Even on Sunday afternoons, Mrs. Pickens' stringy gray hair was a forlorn knob, clamped in place by three bent wire hairpins.

Pickens sniffed bitterly the jessamine scent that lingered in the air after Mrs. Bartholly's duvetyn and lace form had swept into her husband's office.

"It aint fair!" he yapped, and unthinkingly shambled in the open door of the passenger elevator.

"Get out!" instantly snapped the gold-buttoned - and - blue - clothed elevator youth. "The freight's running. It it aint, walking's good."

Pickens got out, and shambled around the second turn of the corridor to the freight elevator. In the basement packing room, twelve stories below, he stepped out into an atmosphere of curiosity and mirth.

"Pickens, my friend, how went it?" greeted a long, sallow youth from behind a small mountain of cartons of spaghetti. "Did our beloved and respected employer sob that it was a mistake and if you would not fulfill that terrible threat to leave him—"

"Shettup!" Pickens said peevishly.

"Ah!" grieved the sallow youth. "I fear our employer sobbed not."

"It haint funny," protested a white-whiskered Teuton, too patriarchal-appearing for his task, which was pushing trucks. "When you can't get along on what you're gettin', how be you goin' to get along when you aint gettin' it all?" He too had suffered a cut. "By golly, some day, there'll be revolution—"

"There'll be a revolution right in this basement, and a bloody one, if forty cases of macaroni aint headed to South Omaha by five o'clock," warned Mills, the foreman, a blue-shirted gentleman of nervous, gray eyes and nervy, bull-dog jowls. "People that like to rest themselves riding up and down elevators in the middle of the afternoon better lay off and take all their time to it," he said pointedly to Pickens. Mills also was upset over lessened wage.

Pickens moved toward the glutinous foothills. But he did not move with the alacritous zeal so essential to good workmanship. He shambled leisurely thither, and his lips worked in inaudible viciousness.

TWO hours later Mills groaned: "Would you believe it? That lanky, louty pinhead goes and ships noodles to South Omaha instead of macaroni! Noodles! And I'll get the devil for it! Pickens!"—wildly—"it'd be a pleasure to drive these four-penny nails into your head instead of this packing case!"

Pickens mumbled that Mills had better try it.

Mills vowed that some day he would.

Pickens sneered, "Will you?"

Mills profanely promised, "I will!"

Pickens mumbled. Mills railed. Pickens' flabby lower lip twitched with fury. Mills' nervous gray eyes dilated with detestation. And then Mills, Pickens, the sallow youth, the patriarchal Teuton and several others dumped the noodle contents of a wooden case, number twelve, to the floor, hustled armfuls of cartoned macaroni from shelf to floor and thence to case, and, in the hustling, sweating, swearing tumult the altercation was forgotten.

And though Mills' screeched epithets had outdone Bartholly's in rancor, as chili con carne out-tangs potatoes boiled in their jackets, Pickens bore Mills no malice. His imagination, in spite of its limitations, embraced the foreman's point of view. Certainly Mills would get the devil for the blunder! Why shouldn't he rave? Pickens was aware that he himself, set in Mills' place, would have raved more violently. Mills was above Pickens, but not so far that the lower man could not glimpse that the rung on which the foreman stood was as hard and precarious as his own. Nothing, though, like the fine-grained, leather-tufted, mahogany-brilliant perch from which Bartholly jeered.

And so, by a process of psychological arithmetic familiar to employers and employees, Pickens was able to add the hate that he owed Mills to the hate that he owed Bartholly, and make the latter creditor for the whole amount.

"If I was rich," mumbled ignorant, vicious Pickens, "I wouldn't talk to a chap like he was a dog. White crow! I wish I could set some black crows to peckin' at his carcass. It aint fair!"

He was still mumbling vengefully when six o'clock came — that cocktail hour of the day which fillips the most toil-stuporous soul.

The sallow youth beamed, and shot to a locker for his cap. It was Wednesday evening, and his new girl was pretty. The white-whiskered truck-pusher ceased to prognosticate gloom. His work was spirit-chafing, but life was not wholly sinister. Back of his bought-on-monthly-payments, ten-by-twenty cottage, he had nine tomato plants which had put forth green nubs. If he caught the first car after six, twenty minutes of happy spading were possible before dark. Mills quit swearing and looked worried. His wife was sick. She had been worse when he left home that morning. Maybe, though, she was better! He too sprinted for the first car.

A glint of amiability cut the vicious flabbiness of Pickens' pale eyes. Hadn't Maggie mentioned that spare-ribs and sauer kraut would compose supper? Sure! Before such succulency, revenge and murderous desire slunk, like miasma before a stiff drying wind. He jammed his hat peacefully on his long, narrow head, and hurried out. Not to a street-car, though. Pickens lived within walking distance, in a clutter of tenements, dingy stores and old houses that once had been new and handsome. Such cluttery habitations, like trampled, dirty sedge around a pool, fringe every city's spreading business center.

Pickens unviciously shambled along. He still hated Bartholly. But it was after six! Home, supper and bed loomed before him. Hating could be postponed. And—oh, Pickens was a craven!—something else could be postponed. No need to spoil Maggie's peace of mind—and the evening—by telling her of the cut—till telling was unavoidable!

HE shambled up the cheap outside stairs of a house that once had boasted a massive stairway of real mahogany. Once that house had been home to the city's foremost family. Now it harbored twelve families which came perilously near being that city's hindmost. What had been big parlors were now sweatshops, and an Italian slept and ripened his stock of bananas in what had been a butler's pantry. Pickens' home of three rooms on the third floor had once been a spoiled young heiress' bedchamber.

Alas for Pickens! Those three small rooms were destitute of the savory odor of sauer-kraut-boiled spare-ribs. Only suds, pungent, rank, greeted his entering nostrils. The kitchen stove, an aged, unbeautiful affair, held nothing but lids and a poker. The table was bare. The floor, however, was not. It bore a boiler of hot suds, two galvanized tubs of the same, a mop, a wet broom, a washboard daubed with remnants of yellow soap, a pan of dirty blueish starch, and a motley puddle of drippings from all this residue of washing day. In the midst stood Mrs. Pickens, gaunt and tired. From two doorways beyond, several small Pickenses peered wishfully. When would Ma start supper?

"Supper ready?" he disconsolately asked. It was a superfluous question. Superfluity is annoying.

"It is not!" declared Mrs. Pickens. And she further declared, in an angry, twangy voice, audible in the butler's pantry and lower, that no supper would appear in that abode till that sudsy mess was cleared away, that she had worked all day till she was that tired she'd as soon lay down and die—

Pickens cut in sullenly. "So'm I tired." At sight of that supperless room, viciousness and hate surged back into his soul, like waves whipped from the beach into the ocean by a stormwind. "And,"—viciously—"I want some supper."

Mrs. Pickens, grumbling, stooped to shift a tub from the center of the floor to the side. Now she jerked up. She was thin and gray-haired, and her eyes were dull holes of weariness and temper. "Better go and find it," she flung at her shambling liege lord. "I'm tired of niggering for a man that can't make more'n eleven dollars a week."

It was Pickens' turn to jerk. Her

words hurt, as Bartholly's had. He could not jab back at Bartholly—but at this gaunt, tired wife he could. And it somehow is balm for your own wound to lacerate another.

"Nine," he said with mean triumph. "I got cut two dollars."

Mrs. Pickens had stooped to the tub, and, mop in hand, was wiping wearily at the surrounding puddle. She whirled up so violently that soapy water sprayed from her hand to Pickens' face. He wiped it away, then scowled triumphantly at her.

"You're joking!" she accused in horror.

"I aint joking." But he cringed before the storm of her eyes. "I aint the only one,"—hastily. "Even Mills got clipped a dollar—"

"Don't talk to me!" she screamed. "You done something! You loafed on your job—"

"Didn't," he contradicted sullenly.

"You did!" she shrilled fiercely. "You good-for-nothing—" She turned, swift, though tired. One gaunt-knuckled hand still held the mop-handle. She raised it, swashed it in the boiler of suds. Pickens bent involuntarily—as a field of corn bends low at the first onsweep of the cyclone. He turned to duck. He was too late. The mop came up from the tin boiler, fast, oozy, vaporous. It came down on Pickens' neck, *swish! flap!* around his shoulders, the water dribbling, soapy and warm, between denim shirt and skin.

He tried to gurgle "I never loafed,"—gurgle,—"honest, Maggie, I didn't!"

"Don't tell me! I know you! And me a-slavin' here till my back is bent double, so the children can have shoes to go in the street with!" *Swish!* Again the sudsy mop was dashed in the boiler—again it came up, hot and vaporous.

Pickens ducked, turned, ran. Mrs. Pickens' voice swept after him, like an angry wind, then blew around and exhausted itself upon the hungry children gaping from the inner doors.

Pickens got down the stairs, into the street. He was shaking with fury. But—and put this to the credit of the weak, shambling fellow—he never thought of venting that fury on his wife. Nor did he run from cravenness. He was physically able to repay her. But fellow-feeling enabled him to understand that she too was impelled by misery. Through the stolidity of his poor brain pecked the consciousness that she was no more to blame than the mop itself for that swash of dirty water. It was as if a pain-goaded horse had bit at a whip, instead of at the man holding the whip. He, Pickens, was the whip—

And Bartholly was the man wielding it.

THE murder germ fattens strangely, multiplies by queer spasms of fertility, after queer periods of infertility. And whether fury feeds the germ or the germ feeds fury is as unprofitable a question for argument as the priority of hen or egg.

Pickens' hands merely sought a resting place when they fumbled into his pockets as he shambled along the street. But the right one touched the pay envelope, which, in the quick departure, he had neglected to give Maggie. That docked envelope! His lank, narrow, vacuous face contracted. Bartholly! He'd like to kill him.

Yet, even then, it was a fiberless wish. The germ yawned, then snoozed again. Bartholly was not near.

Pickens shambled on. The hot July sun, even after sinking below the horizon of roofs, blistered the ugly old street into uglier poverty. Pickens' pale eyes rested on it with dull loathing—as a carp's eyes might rest on the dry sand. At the second corner that he passed, a speaker on a barrel was adding ugliness of gesture and raucous voice. "And, men, my heart bleeds for you," he was crying. "Gripped by the iron hand of poverty—"

Pickens halted.

"Ground into the dust! Whipped by labor's rawhide, like beasts of the field—" A sob of compassion accompanied the information. "Treated as Nero's serfs would have refused to be treated—"

"Uh-huh," said Pickens thoughtfully. "That's me."

"And for why?"—boomingly. "That capital may roll and grow fat and—"

"That's Bartholly," said Pickens. He listened. Mills would not have believed that Pickens could listen so raptly. The barrel speaker was a sonorous-throated murder-coccus that had roused and was inspecting its lodgings.

"And the remedy lies in your own sturdy hands, men!"



He turned to duck. He was too late.

fellow who once had barked for Ringling Brothers. Like honey down a hungry jaybird's throat, his rant and raucity slid down Pickens' hungry mind and offered itself as grub to a perky young

Pickens spread out one lean, lank hand, and carefully inspected it.

"Why submit to be mocked? And sneered at? And jeered at? And mistreated? By a vile tyrannical band! I

ask you why!" he roared. And then, the full throat contracted. The mighty voice softened. Like a mother crooning to a sick child, the speaker crooned, "My poor trod-upon brothers!"

Now, the gist of the full-larynxed speaker's remarks, peeled of their oratory, was that the sturdy Republicans of the seventh ward should arise in their might and refuse the voting machines that a vile, bribed, tyrannical Democratic council was stuffing down their pure, protesting throats. But Pickens made a mistake that mightier men have made. He applied general oratory to specific woe. "That's all I am," he sniveled. "Poor and trod-on!"

"Oh, why, my brothers," demanded the Republican ward-spieler, "are your most sacred instincts throttled? Why are you flouted? Scalded with the waters of adversity?"

"I'd like to know," moaned Pickens.

"Because, my brothers, ye let yourselves be flouted," bellowed the megaphonic Solomon. "And scalded—"

"Hey, you! That'll be about all," interfered a policeman. "You're obstructing traffic." The policeman was a vile Democrat who had an abiding faith in his party's power to tuck any election away in its waistcoat pocket. Therefore, why allow privilege to a raucous Republican?

"Stop me!" tauntingly begged the ward spieler.

"Right away." And he of the party in power promptly kicked in two barrel staves with one hoist of his tyrannical No. 12, G-last, foot.

PICKENS grieved a moment for his champion, but the dissolving crowd floated him onward. And with part of it, he shambled into a saloon on the next corner.

Now once or twice a week, Saturday evening preferred, Pickens indulged in a glass of beer. Maggie dared him to squander more than ten cents. Heretofore he had never dared. But oratory is nerving. And when you have had no supper—

Pickens called for whisky. In this saloon, whisky was ten cents a glass. Paradoxically, when whisky is ten cents a glass, you are served with a more generous portion than when it is fifteen. In other parts of town, that same amount would have fumed a man's discontent with amiable melancholy, would have diffused gentleness into his bitterness. The brand served here, by a squat, turbulent-eyed bar-tender, was the kind that turns brain, stomach and eyeballs blood-red.

"Ah!" said Pickens almost directly. "If this was this morning, I'd tell Bartholly — old devil! — what I think of him."

A moment later: "I'd not tell him, though." Pickens' pale eyes glistened. "I'd just raise my hand,"—he raised it, and the five bony fingers crackled apart, like wind-torn twigs—"and I'd bring it —slap!—across his face!"

By way of sealing this retrospective threat, Pickens ordered another drink. The turbulent-eyed bartender inspected him keenly. And the second whisky was cheaper, a brand dealt only to individuals who gave signs of owning a stomach impervious to wood alcohol. Pickens leaned against the bar and let the wood-alcoholic beverage seethe soothingly through his veins.

Nowhere can you find such seclusion as a saloon affords. It is the one earthly spot where you can stand in a crowd and mutter violently or furtively to yourself without drawing undesired attention. Your mood is not remarked on, for the majority of those present are either getting rid of, or acquiring, a mood of their own.

"Slap him!" scorned Pickens. "No, I wouldn't, I'd at him with my fist!" He clenched it, held it at arm's length, and critically inspected the big knuckles. "I ought to have jammed his fat face clean through his fat head. And then he'd learned how to talk to a poor trod-on working man."

Pickens ordered another whisky. And now he leaned on the bar, and his weak face contorted with hate. "I wish I'd killed him—this morning!"

And a moment later: "He ought to be killed....

"Some one ought to kill him....

"That fellow on the barrel—he'd have killed him—quick!"

"Some one *will* kill him—some day.

"I've a good mind to go up to him to-morrow morning....

"I've a mind to go to-night!"

SWIFTLY Pickens shambled out of the saloon and up the street. Twice daily for years he had walked that ugly thoroughfare, and so, though his eyes had seemed dully unaware of its ugly flanks, he was now able to go straight to a pawnshop whose window, as forlorn and soiled as the saloon's, held a revolver. Likewise memory subconsciously told him where Bartholly lived, in a big white stone house three miles east. Pickens had once, years before, been sent out there with a package.

He entered the pawnshop and bought the weapon. It was a rusty, shabby article. The thought hewed through his heavy mind that Maggie would certainly empty a whole tub of suds over him if she knew he was wasting her money for that old thing. Hers? His mind viciously ejected the possessive in favor of another. *His!* Let her rave!

But though he threw forth the money for the revolver recklessly, habit ruled him in a smaller matter. He never thought of wasting a nickel to ride on a street-car, but walked, his loosely jointed legs swinging in long, vicious strides; past the tenements that sweated in the warm evening air; past dingy-windowed stores and saloons; past decrepit towering houses, similar to the one in which he lived, houses that once had been gorgeously new, when the street was new, but now, with the street, were like old bottles burdened with new wine, and were cracking with their too boisterous human contents.

Pickens saw none of them, buildings or people, except one slattern group of women, gossiping shrilly at the end of an alley. Such a shrill, vexed voice had Maggie. He strode on faster. It was not fair!—no more to Maggie than to himself.

Nor did he see the more sightly but still depressing clutter of rooming houses that succeeded; nor the squares of decent-painted flats and tidy business segments that came next; nor the more pretentious streets, where stone façade lapped brick façade, that followed.

Then the buildings were farther apart. Strips of greensward separated them. The window draperies seemed to flutter forth a hint of inner coolness that tenementdom did not know. And while in the poorer parts of town, Pickens had attracted little attention, perhaps because there were many of his kind and humor, here people turned on the clean pavements to look curiously after him. In the comfort of the surroundings, he was an alien, and he jarred on the eyes as a wrong note jars the ear.

The distances between the houses increased. From strips, the sward between became squares of lawn; then these squares in turn gave way to bigger squares and were dotted with trees and shrubs. Pickens' vicious lope slackened. And since the big white stone mansion with its ornate setting of iron fence and syringas was near, he became cautious, avoided the glare of the arc-lights that silvered the boulevard, and skulked in whatever shadow he could find.

Bartholly's house was easily located. It stood big and white over the low dark shrubbery. Pickens slid along by the driveway, ducking into a shadowed nook at every sound, scudding forth when such sound proved dangerless, rounding the pillared circumference of the encircling piazza, his long, lank body flattening against the stone like a snooping lizard, his pale, vicious eyes reconnoitering each window, his bony, hate-twitched fingers prying at each catch and aperture, until finally, when he had pulled himself up on a vined trellis, he found all that he sought—an open window, a lighted window, Bartholly beyond, and—great luck!—Bartholly facing him!

Pickens' eyes glowed. He drew the revolver from his coat pocket.

MR. AND MRS. BARTHOLLY were at the dinner table, and except for a servant at the sideboard, alone in the room. It was a beautiful room. Pickens drew close to the steel screen, and the swaying cream-silk drapery almost brushed his face. His eyes hurt from the hate that dilated them. He did not know that the dull brown beauty of the floor-

covering was hand-woven; that the severe carving of the great sideboard was as costly as it was severe; that an artist had elaborated the tan and cream and topaz scheme of the walls and ceiling; that other artists had perfected the white and silver and yellow sheen of napery and service and electrolier.

But he knew that the big, sleek man drawing a silver knife through an odorous roast that cost more than Pickens' meat for a month was comfortable—and he himself was distinctly uncomfortable!

And the woman in front of him, whose soft hair, smooth shoulders and silk gown seemed to make one united white sneer at him and his, was happy—and Maggie was unhappy!

"It aint fair," observed Pickens for the last time, and pointed the revolver at an animated spot several inches to the southeast of the portly, khaki-hued chin series.

And just then Mr. Bartholly dropped his expensive-handled silver knife to the floor. That did not spoil him as a target. But he must stoop to pick it up! Pickens writhed impatiently. Would he ever get back into position?

Bartholly did not pick the knife up, however. Halfway to the floor, his hand drew back; his heavy body drew up; his face came back into position. It was red, that heavy face. From the effort of bending, Pickens would have thought, had he thought about it at all.

And then, Bartholly's face grew redder. Pickens didn't know, not being an authority on facial changes, but it was the shamed red of a man who once more has betrayed that he has never become accustomed to the ministrations of servants.

Since the target again was satisfactory, Pickens' finger went down hard on the trigger.

"What an awkward lout you are!" remarked Mrs. Bartholly.

Pickens' finger fell off the trigger. "Huh?" For a second he actually thought that Mrs. Bartholly was addressing himself!

"I guess it aint no crime to drop your knife," snarled Mr. Bartholly. The servant had left the room.

"No?" sweetly sneered Mrs. Bartholly—as sweetly as a piano's high keys tinkle.

"No, it aint!" bawled her husband. "Anyway,"—sneering in his heavy turn,—"after all these years I should think you'd begin to get used to my 'loutish' ways!"

"I haven't,"—coldly.

"You didn't have to marry me."

"I thought that you had the compensating virtue of being able to make money,"—candidly. "It seems, however, that you haven't."

Even Pickens could grasp that Bartholly was in iminent danger of choking. His throat heaved over the low white



Pickens' eyes glowed. He drew the revolver from his coat pocket.

collar, like a dog's at a rope, and the corrugated series of chins swelled like an Ohio river in the spring rains. "I told you," — spluttering, — "that business is bad! Rotten! I'm not the only one. It's all over the country! This infernal tariff revision—"

"Oh, that poor tariff!" — sweetly. "How many sins and sinners have crawled under its mantle!" Then the tinkling sweetness of her voice shrilled into twangy unsweetness—as of a piano out of tune. "Bah! Since you have so thoroughly demonstrated your incompetence, why don't you put some competent man in charge of the business."

"Madam!" roared the insulted Bartholly, "I'll remind you that I was competence, why don't you put some really competent man in charge of the business."

"Ah!"—unsweetly. "But a business is like children — so much more easily brought into existence than cared for intelligently afterward."

Pickens cringed. Her voice was shrilly tinkling—but you involuntarily cringed under it—Bartholly did!—as before a sudsy, swashing mop.

And then before her logic and before Pickens' pale wide eyes, Bartholly not only cringed—he slumped in his chair. All his importance and comfortableness of mien were as squashed as a spilled pan of mush. "I do the best I can," he muttered. "And I aint the only one. Even the solid houses are feeling the depression—"

"Don't talk to me!" snapped his wife. "I know you!"

"Huh!" breathed Pickens. Then he clambered down, tossed a revolver behind a clump of syringas, and scooted. "Poor old jellyfish!"—wonderingly. "And me a-going to *kill* him!"

PICKENS sped down the boulevard; past grounds dotted with trees and shrubs; past smaller lawns, neat squares of sward, strips of green; past stone façades that lapped brick façades; past the section of tidy flats and trim business segments; into the depressing clutter of rooming-houses, dingy frame stores and tenements. And as he sped, a wall fell, a wall that Pickens had confidently supposed divided, and would divide forever, his unhappy self and his unhappy kind from the remainder of the world which was happy. It had been as thick and impenetrable as fog — that wall. Pickens saw that it also was as unsubstantial.

"And me a-thinkin' that old geezer was as comfortable as a pig in a corn bin," Pickens reproached himself. He hurried up the side stairs and sidled into the familiar atmosphere of sudsy vapor and washing-powder aroma. It greeted him not unpleasantly. He grinned sheepishly. The tubs and the boiler had been pushed out of sight. The floor was mopped clean and dry. The table was covered with a red cloth.

Maggie was frying pork chops. She looked up at his entrance, then quickly down — but not before Pickens had glimpsed the look of unmistakable relief that lightened the dull fatigue of her eyes.

"Where've you been?" she demanded crossly. "Keeping supper waiting all this time!" And she added, in the constrained tone of people who make verbal amends seldom, and then clumsily, "Don't go to worritin' about that cut. I'll get another wash, somewhere—"

"Don't you go to worritin'," retorted Pickens. He spoke with a new and vibrant alacrity that was more of the spirit than of the tongue. And he lifted his chin, from which wabblingness had gone, leaving it perky—like the bill of a hungry black crow. "I'm going to look for another job."

With a gaunt-knuckled hand, Mrs. Pickens pushed up a gray wisp of hair, and looked at him curiously. Something that was almost hope glistened in the hopelessness of her eyes. "I always thought, Al, that if you'd just perk up, you could hold your own with the best of 'em." Then, inquisitively, "Where was you?"

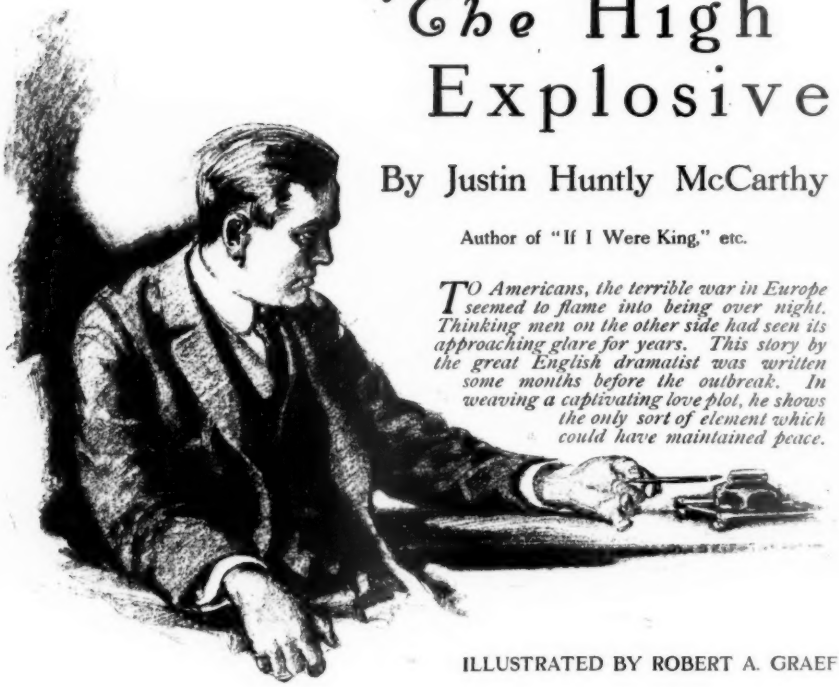
Grinned Pickens: "Sorting a case of ideas that's been wrong-packed for years."

The High Explosive

By Justin Huntly McCarthy

Author of "If I Were King," etc.

TO Americans, the terrible war in Europe seemed to flame into being over night. Thinking men on the other side had seen its approaching glare for years. This story by the great English dramatist was written some months before the outbreak. In weaving a captivating love plot, he shows the only sort of element which could have maintained peace.



ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

FOUR men and one woman sat as Haddow's guests at the round table that overlooked the purpled and yellowed Surrey rough-heath that seemed to stretch to the world's end.

Siegfried von Gunther, bearded like the *Old Man* of the nonsense rhyme, and spectacled like a seventeenth century Spaniard, represented Germany. Philippe Desmoulins, with his blonde face and Valois beard, represented France. Boris Ramiroff, lean, meager, shaven clean, represented Russia. Vicenzo Carpucci, who looked like a fat troubadour newly come into money, represented Italy.

Haddow represented all the English-speaking peoples by virtue of his own Columbian cheek. He was chiefly interested in the fact that Austro-Hungary was represented by Teresa Josefa. She was the Archduchess Teresa Josefa, and was neither ashamed of it, nor vain of it, holding that names were things of little importance. Also she belonged to a great family that had now and then the whim to renounce greatness. Haddow was neither attracted nor repelled by her rank; he was simply captured by her beauty, the Hungarian type of her Magyar mother asserting itself warmly, dominating the Austrian blood.

Haddow was saying his say with the clarity of knowledge and the distinction of authority; and the little Continental Congress listened with all its ears. He spoke to the company, but his thoughts were with Teresa Josefa.

"You must admit," he said aloud, "the measureless importance of such a discovery, if such a discovery there were."

But he was thinking of the day when he had first met Teresa Josefa at the International Science Conference in Budapest a year ago, that conference he had crossed the Atlantic to attend as one of the representatives of America. He had not wanted to go, he remembered, and smiled faintly at the remembrance.



While he talked to his audience and thought to himself, he held a pencil in his hand and tapped idly at the ink-stand in front of him.

"Up to now," he was saying, "our greatest achievements in this direction have been relatively petty."

At Budapest that day many and wise had spoken wisely, but to Haddow's mind Teresa Josefa spoke wisest of all. He might have thought so in spite of his long head, if she had babbled foolishness, for he fell headlong in love with her loveliness, as many men had done before and vainly, but none so deeply or resolutely as Myrus Haddow, the master-chemist. So Myrus Haddow had assured himself, and he always meant what he said.

"In the history of science," Haddow assured his listeners, "there is no finality, or at least none that need not be negligible to us creatures and creators of to-day."

He was listening over again to what Teresa Josefa had said that day at Budapest. Young as she was, she was already no mere pawn on the chess-board of wisdom, but a piece whose moves were momentous. People talked pretty much about what pleased them at the Budapest conference, and Teresa Josefa rode her hobby bravely. Her passion was peace and the blessing that peace must bring to a world waxing in wisdom and still so stupidly cruel.

"But there come periods in history," Haddow said resonantly, "when some astonishing innovation seems to bring finality."

Teresa Josefa's words had rung in Haddow's ears like joy-bells: they seemed to ring so still. "In the old fairy tales," she said, "there is often a princess with many suitors, and the princess is hard to please and harder to win. But at last she promises her hand to that one of all her wooers who shall accomplish some task that seems impossible. And often in these tales some nameless, fameless youth performs the miracle and wins the lady's hand."

He recalled her pause, with roses on each cheek, and then her conclusion:

"If I were the maid of a fairy tale I would yield my hand to him who could promise the world twenty more years of peace. For surely in twenty further peaceful years the world would learn the folly as well as the horror of war and guess that the Golden Age is not yesterday's or to-morrow's but to-day's."

He remembered the discreet laughter and applause that greeted this sally. Those sage elders and youngsters took Teresa Josefa's peroration in jest. Haddow took it in earnest, and took it to himself, sturdily. To be sure, he was neither nameless nor fameless. Haddowite, used all over the world, had re-made his fortune and new-made his name. But surely Teresa Josefa was out of his star? He had been presented to her by the Prince of Monaco, who presided at the conference; she had greeted him very agreeably in excellent English and had shown, without seeming to show it, that she was familiar with his "Treatise on Transmutation" which had gained for him the Moscow medal and the Quincy Parkyns prize. But she was a royal archduchess, out of his star, out of his star.

That night he stared at the Danube from his hotel window, and smoked many pipes and thoughts. From fume of tobacco and fume of brain the seed was sown for to-day's harvest.

Thus Haddow mused: a capable man who could do several things at once, like Julius Cæsar, could even talk seriously and think seriously, and trifle at the same time. For while he talked to his audience and thought to himself he held a pencil in his hand and tapped idly at the ink-stand in front of him, now and then giving a sharp, prolonged stroke as if to punctuate his meaning or emphasize a phrase.

The four men listened to him with a steady attention worthy of the speaker, and the subject, and themselves. No one of these men was a member of the official government of his country. No one of them was formally or informally an accredited envoy from anybody to anybody. No one of them cast a shadow of authority to settle anything over Haddow's table.

Yet Haddow was quite content with their presence. He knew that each one of them was a man whose like is always to be found in every country and at every stage in its history, a man who, without ever being conspicuously before the public, ever notorious, yet wields power and exercises influence far greater than that of more patent authority. The case of the woman in his audience was naturally somewhat different. An archduchess who chooses to become a scientist and win fame at the game, could not hope to escape publicity.

Like the men, Teresa Josefa listened intently to what Haddow was saying, though unlike them she seemed to take a slightly puzzled notice of Haddow's idle play with his pencil. She had liked his masterful carriage when he was presented to her at Budapest. His position in the world of science had impelled, even compelled her to answer his cryptic invitation to his English laboratory, (Teresa Josefa did as she pleased without regard to courtly conventions); and having accepted, she was thrilled and enthralled by what he was saying. None the less, she was almost irritably conscious of the pencil.

Haddow made an end of speaking and leaned back, still fiddling with his pencil. His gaze, which seemed to question equally the faces of his hearers, rested a fraction of time longer on the face of Teresa Josefa, and he glowed at the show of interest his words had kindled there.

There was a brief silence. Then von Gunther, to whom his three companions seemed tacitly to accord a precedence in comment, made as if to speak. Suddenly recalling the presence of the young archduchess, he checked himself and turned towards her with a glance that asked a permission which Teresa Josefa accorded with a smile. He rested his heavy, hairy hands upon the table, and looked steadily at Haddow through his vast glasses.

"In sum," Gunther rumbled, speaking in French, the language they all used in common, "you seriously assert that you have invented an explosive so powerful that a mere pinch of it has more destructive force than a ton of the highest explosive at present known — namely, your own Haddowite."

Haddow nodded assent. Too excited to speak, he seemed serenely at his ease as he toyed with his pencil. The men had grown used to, and indifferent to, this little trick of his; but it seemed to command even more than before the attention of Teresa Josefa. For she was now quite sure, where she had been uncertain. Haddow was undoubtedly tapping a message to her in the Morse code and tapping it in Hungarian, a language as unfamiliar to the others as Chinese. "Teresa Josefa," the message said peremptorily, "Teresa Josefa, listen to me." And Teresa Josefa did listen while Carpucci took up the tale in his buttery Tuscan accent.

"You say," observed the Italian, "that you have so far communicated this secret to no one?"

"To no one," Haddow replied, hardly interrupting his faint penciling, "except to the persons assembled in this room."

Thus his voice. His pencil said: "Teresa Josefa, if you understand what I am saying, place your right hand upon your left."

Teresa Josefa's eyes flickered ever so little as she carelessly placed her right hand upon her left.

"And I understand," said Ramiroff, "that if certain conditions are fulfilled, you do not propose to make this secret known to any of the great European governments."

Haddow spoke slowly.

"If you will severally promise to use your influence with your respective governments in the interests of European peace — of peace, I mean, among the great powers here represented—I promise not to make my discovery known to the British government."

"Why do you emphasize the British government?" von Gunther questioned.

"Because," answered Haddow, "blood is thicker than water, as a countryman of mine was pleased to observe on a certain memorable occasion. Keep God's peace among yourselves and with England for another twenty years—well and good. But if you don't, my secret goes to Great Britain."

"When you say 'if you don't,'" commented von Gunther, "you mean 'if you can't.'"

"No, I don't," said Haddow; "I mean what I say, for I know that your wishes go in your kingships."

Von Gunther grunted, not unamiably. Desmoulins twiddled his Valois beard to a fine point, and there was a faint hint of skepticism in his voice which had been lacking in the utterances of his companions.

"I suppose," he said suavely, "that our distinguished host is prepared to give us some positive proof of his assertions."

The German, the Italian and the Russian glanced at each other furtively like detected children. They realized that they had taken Haddow's statement absolutely for granted, and they felt a certain resentment of Desmoulins' superior astuteness.

"Of course," said von Gunther gruffly, "we all assume that Mr. Haddow will demonstrate to us the powers of his wonderful explosive. We do not doub his belief in it, but the best of us can make mistakes."

Russia and Italy chorused agreement with Germany. Haddow's pencil telegraphed to Teresa Josefa: "All is well. Show that you believe in me." He leaned forward a little across the table.

"Surely," he said coolly, "I am ready to demonstrate the accuracy of my assertions. They must seem surprising, but I am inclined to think that the demonstration will surprise you still more."

"If you have invented such an explosive," von Gunther said, "you could make a vast amount of money by it."

"I make all the money I want by Haddowite," Haddow answered. "I am not out to make money to-day."

"A disinterested devotion to humanity?" Desmoulins queried. Haddow nodded emphatically.

"You have hit me to a *T*. I am an American citizen. I don't care a nickel for your old civilizations, as you call them, but I care all there is to care for peace." Here he glanced ever so slightly at Teresa Josefa. "My father was called 'Stellar Shine' Haddow because his 'Stellar Shoe Shine' blacked all the boots in the country, from New York to New Orleans. He made his pile that way, and I spent his pile another way,

but then I was able to invent Haddowite and I made another and a bigger pile. I am called Haddowite Haddow because I went one better than the best. Now I am going a big bunch of units better still, and Heaven knows what they would call me if my discovery got to the market. Something like 'The Fire Bug,' I should say."

He rose to his feet and produced a key on a chain. "If any of you," he said, "are carrying any matches or lighters of any kind about with you, I must ask you to hand them over. I don't take any risk when I expose the powder, and I knew a man once who always struck a match when he got excited."

The German produced a large silver match-box. Desmoulins carried one of the familiar little card-board affairs with the india-rubber spring. Ramiroff produced a pocket-torch, and the Italian carried no combustible. The Archduchess handed to Haddow a thin gold cigarette case which contained a small reservoir of vestas. Haddow opened the window, placed the collection on the window-sill, and lowered the sash. He then unlocked a safe built into the concrete wall and took from it a small coffer, some four inches by two, made of a metal that looked like dulled pewter. Haddow opened the letter-lock that fastened the box, set the little coffer on the table and lifted the lid. The box was half-full of a pale yellow powder.

"That," said Haddow, "is my high explosive. Naturally, I cannot allow you to analyze it, but you can taste it if you like. It is perfectly harmless that way."

As he spoke, he dipped his finger in the box, lifted it tipped with yellow to his mouth, and licked away the dust. The others followed his example. Gunther found that it tasted like sulphur; Desmoulins, that it recalled sugar; Ramiroff suggested pepper; and the Italian, salt. The Archduchess said nothing, but made a wry face.

"Would the contents of this box suffice to destroy this house?" Gunther asked. He was not really skeptical, for he knew Haddow's value, but he certainly was surprised. Haddow laughed.

"The quantity there," he asserted, "would annihilate a big village."

With the point of a knife, he tilted on a sheet of paper about as much of the powder as would thinly cover a six-penny piece.

"There," he said, "is enough and more than enough to reduce this dwelling to dust."

The four men and the one woman stared at him. "I should like to see that," murmured the Russian. Haddow laughed again.

"I am afraid I can hardly oblige you, for I happen to want my house. But I will give you a proof that will be quite as satisfactory. In a field at a little distance from here, we will find the materials ready for constructing with our own hands a solid monument for our little pinch of powder. Thereafter you shall see what you shall see."

As he spoke, he tattooed listlessly with his finger on the table. To the Archduchess the sound recalled the words of an old Hungarian song which said, "I will build me a cabin by a hawthorn tree."

A few moments later the party was trailing over the heath-land together in Haddow's "Roughways" car. Haddow drove with the Archduchess by his side; the others sat in the body of the car. All were silent, for all were too interested in their purpose to make ordinary conversation. After about a mile, Haddow came to a halt in the middle of a great stretch of gold and purple heath-land. Haddow's house was out of sight behind a shoulder of hill. All around them the heath rolled into distance. Hard by was a great quantity of building materials and tools, and a little way removed there stood a lonely hawthorn tree.

The men disembarked while the Archduchess remained in the car. Haddow picked up a brick from the pile, and with a smart stroke of a trowel, broke it in two with all a mason's neatness. "These are just ordinary bricks," he said. He gave Gunther the trowel and bade him pick a brick. Von Gunther pointed to one in the middle of a stack. Haddow bowled the lot over so that the bricks scattered. Von Gunther pounced upon his choice and hammered at it, clumsily and ineffectively. Haddow set him a fresh example, and then the German



Teresa Josefa looked thoughtfully about her. "There is an old Hungarian song," she said, "about a cabin by a hawthorn tree. Build your house by that hawthorn tree yonder."

succeeded in shattering his specimen, which proved just like its predecessors. Haddow invited the other men to make the experiment but they declared themselves perfectly satisfied.

"What are we going to do now?" von Gunther asked.

"Did you ever hear of the house that Jack built?" Haddow asked. "We are going to follow Jack's example and build a little house, and Her Highness shall tell us where to set it up."

Teresa Josefa looked thoughtfully about her. "There is an old Hungarian song," she said, "about a cabin by a hawthorn tree. Build your house by that hawthorn tree yonder."

For the next hour the five men worked briskly with wheel-barrows, trowels, bricks and mortar under Haddow's directions, while the Archduchess watched them from the car with the enigmatic eyes of a lovely, ironic sphinx.

At the end of the time, the five workers were very warm and rather grimy, but a solid building was completed that looked like a huge doll's house. The inside formed but a single chamber with walls several feet thick. Haddow took a screw of paper from his pocket, opened it and showed to each of his companions in turn that it contained the pinch of yellow powder. Then he placed the paper and powder on a brick which he placed carefully inside the newly-made structure. Next he produced a fuse.

"This," he said, "is a Reinbaum electric fuse which can be timed to go off at any period from five minutes to half an hour."

Ramiroff nodded. "I know them," he said. "It was one of them that fired the train that blew up the Dolgorovsky Palace."

"We will time it for twenty minutes," Haddow said. He did so, connected it with the brick that carried the innocent-looking little pinch of yellow powder, and rapidly closed up the aperture. Then the men climbed into the car, which sped swiftly back to the house. The party sat

down in the laboratory to wait upon events. Desmoulins took out his watch and held it in his palm. Time ticked on in silence, presently broken by Desmoulins.

"The time is up," he said quietly, with a hint of triumph in his voice. Haddow rose, and taking out his watch, leaned across the table as if to compare its dial with that of the Frenchman.

"Surely not," he protested. "A Reinbaum fuse is usually true to a second. It should come off now."

It did.

The air was filled with a noise like a thousand thunderstorms. A great flare that seemed composed of all possible angry colors seemed for a staggering moment to inflame the world with a devilish illumination. All around, what sounded like the voices of doom grumbled and rumbled. The dwelling appeared to rock like a crazy ship in a tearing sea. Four distinguished foreigners with pallid faces gaped at Haddow, who, leaning against the table in an attitude something like that of the conventional Shakespeare, smiled. Through the silence that succeeded the awful reverberation, the voice of Teresa Josefa was heard, asking if she might have a cigarette now.

A few seconds later the car was again plunging its way over the heather. When it got to its destination it would, if it had been a sentient creature, have denied vehemently that it had ever traveled to such a spot before. A vast space of the countryside was rent and ruined as if an ordinary, conventional earthquake had happened. There was no sign of the gold and purple carpet; there was no sight of the House that Jack built. Also there was no sign of the hawthorn tree. It looked as if the imprisoned Titan that struggles beneath the earth had got one hand free for an instant and torn that bit of England to pieces.

The party traveled back in the silence befitting so cataclysmic an event. Again in the laboratory, von Gunther took Haddow by the hand.

"Young man," he said, "I can promise you that whatever little influence I may happen to have in my own country, is all for peace."

Haddow kept his countenance as he thanked him, for he knew the greatness of von Gunther's influence as well as von Gunther did. Russian, Italian, Frenchman echoed the German assurance. "Dear friend," added Desmoulins sweetly, "what a fortune you might make out of that pretty little powder of yours."

"I didn't set out to make a fortune," Haddow answered briskly. "I set out to make peace, twenty years of peace."

"And you have made it," commented Carpucci quietly. "As my countryman Tacitus said long ago, you have made a desert and called it peace."

The slightly hysterical laughter which followed was allayed by the voice of the princess saying farewell to the majority of the company, none of whom, of course, could take their leave until she, akin to royalty, had given the signal. But to Haddow, the Archduchess gave a command-wish to remain, which kept him with her while the others departed for the station and London, and thereafter their respective capitals.

When the man and woman were alone, the Archduchess looked at Haddow with a smile that might have inspired a new Leonardo with a new Gioconda.

"So you know Hungarian," she said. "You did not speak it to me in Budapest, I remember."

"I have learned it since then, Your Highness."

"Please do not 'Highness' me any more. We are alone, just man-student and woman-student. You called me Teresa Josefa bluntly enough just now."

"That was to attract your attention and show you what I was trying to do."

"Very well. Call me Teresa Josefa now. I wish it. Why did you learn Hungarian."

"Because it was your language, Teresa Josefa."

The girl's smile deepened. She took a cigarette from her little gold case and lit it, with her eyes fixed on the young man's face. "Let me see your Powder of Peace again," she commanded. Obliviously obedient, Haddow opened the safe and the box, and set the box on the table. Instantly, Teresa Josefa dropped her burning cigarette into the midst of



A few seconds later the car was again plunging its way over the heather.

the yellow powder. For a moment, Haddow did not realize the significance of her action.

"Well," she questioned, "how did you do it?"

Haddow saw that the game was up before he had intended it to end.

"How did you guess?" he asked.

If an archduchess may be said to grin, Teresa Josefa grinned.

"You did it very well," she admitted, "but I know too much about things to believe in your pinch of magnificent mischief just yet. And you took me into your confidence when you tapped."

"I should have told you, anyhow," he asserted.

"How did you do it?"

"I began a year ago, just after I met you. Rented these acres of waste land for a song. Sentineled them to insure privacy. Built my laboratory. Imported a Hungarian engineer, and at the same time mined yonder field from here, and learned Hungarian. When all was ready I wrote to Your Highness—"

"Ah!" she said menacingly, "—to me and to my four representative men."

"Well, my trick came off. You don't think they suspected anything?"

"I am sure,"—Teresa Josefa smiled, —"that each of them suspected, but that each believed the others were taken in. And as each of them is honestly anxious for peace, he will assure himself that he was convinced and will act on that conviction. I think we may rely on peace between the four great powers as long as our four friends are alive."

"Good," said Haddow. Teresa Josefa sighed. "I am sorry for the hawthorn tree," she said softly.

"It was in a good cause." Haddow insisted.

There was a little pause. Then the Archduchess spoke again.

"Why did you do all this?"

"Partly to please you." Haddow answered. "You said that day at Budapest that you wanted twenty years of peace. I think you've got it."

"I really think I have." Teresa Josefa agreed. "And partly—?"

"To please myself. You said something else that day at Budapest."

"I seem to have said a good deal that day at Budapest." murmured Teresa Josefa pensively.

"You said that you might find a little love in your heart for the man who could bring this peace about."

"I don't think I quite said that." murmured Teresa Josefa, challenging him with her enigmatic eyes.

"You said, at least," persisted Haddow, "that you might be willing to give your hand—"

He paused, a little abashed and baffled, now that it came to the touch. She studied him steadily.

"Has it occurred to you," she asked, "what giving you my hand would mean?" Before he could reply she went on: "I should have to give up my rank, my fortune, my country. Do you think you are worth that?"

"That is not for me to say," Haddon answered simply.

"I should cease to be an archduchess," she continued. "I should have no money, no lands; I should have no country."

"Pardon me," said Haddow stoutly, "you would have my country." He did not add that also she would have his money, for he felt that whatever might happen, that was beside the question.

"Do you think," asked Teresa Josefa in an even voice, as if she were considering some minor scientific problem, "that you have the right to ask me to give all these things up?"

"Pardon me again." said Haddow, "but it was you who made the suggestion about bestowing your hand."

"I do not think that I expected to be taken in earnest."

"Beautiful women are always taken in earnest when they promise themselves," was Haddow's only comment. He could have reminded Teresa Josefa that one of her cousins had relinquished the succession to a throne in order to live a free man's life in a free man's way. But it appeared that Teresa Josefa did not need to be reminded.

"My cousin Ottocar," she said, "gave up his inheritance with a light heart because he believed that there was something in life better than his inheritance. What a man of my race did, a woman of my race may do. There are the words of a poet—

"Over the mountain's purple rim
The happy princess followed him."

And she held out her hand to Haddow.

"The Metal Knob" **is the title of the next story by Mr. McCarthy. It is as unusual in its way as the story you have just read.** ***"The Metal Knob"*** **will be in the December Red Book, on the news-stands November 23rd.**

Old Gander

By Opie Read

Author of "The New Mr. Howerson," "Old Lim Jucklin," etc.

THERE is the flavor of the real South in an Opie Read story: a sort of proud Southern friendliness that delights all of us. We think this is one of the best stories Mr. Read has ever written.

ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER TITTLE



"But I don't want to starve. There can be nothing gained by it; there is no need of it. Why not let me teach school?"

"MY DEAR," said the Major, "history is illumined with the flames that leaped about the stake. In the past nothing was more ennobling than martyrdom, and in this degenerate age, the martyrdom of starvation can be made as honorable as the ancient martyrdom of the stake. We starve."

"But I don't want to starve," his daughter disputed with him. "There can be nothing gained by it; there is no need of it. Why not let me teach school?"

The Major's emotion ousted him from his chair, and up and down the room which once had been a library he strode, grasping to get the reins of himself, to hold himself in check from unseemly rage. "I have implored you not to mention that hateful subject again. I have sworn that I would rather see you dead than a school teacher. Does his-

tory recount a Killigrew teaching school?"

"I believe not," the girl answered, "but I gather from history that during the reign of Elizabeth more than one Killigrew found employment with John Hawkins."

"Ah, very true, for Hawkins was as brave a gentleman as ever strode a deck."

"Or as ever compelled a merchant crew to walk a plank, as ever committed blasphemous outrage by naming his ship the *Jesus*, loading it with slaves and selling them to the American plantations. He—"

"That will do," the Major cried with a lurch as if he had encountered a choppy wave. "I don't care to discuss any Yankee history that you may have been pleased to read." Suddenly he turned about with an air almost of imploration. "Verne, why not recognize the fact that the world is about ready to close up its disreputable affairs? The coming of each day points the truth of it. I have sold off my estate till there is not more than thirty acres left, and this tract is so poor that the negroes have all deserted it, and when a negro deserts land on account of its poverty it is poor indeed. The negro, being humble, loves humble land. But the land remaining to me is worse than humble; it is pauperized."

"You can sell the house, Father."

"Verne, it is astounding that you haven't more pride than even to hint at such a thing. This old house was built of bricks brought from England more than two hundred and fifty years ago. Generation after generation of Killigrews have fought to maintain it, and its floors are stained with the best blood of the new world. As I said before, we starve."

THE old man believed that the time for the martyrdom of starvation had come. The last sacrifice had been the sale of a colt, a woolly-looking thing, but as its forefathers had been sired on the place, the Major's pride and endearment glamoured wool into silk and gave to a dull eye the flash of burnished steel. It was said that when a new neighbor—only forty years in the county—offered but ten dollars for the colt, the Major grabbed at his pocket for his knife to let out the blood of the offender, but that mocking circumstance compelled him finally to accept eleven dollars.

His greatest concern was to keep his poverty hidden from the prying eyes of the community, and this he did fairly well, having a stock of bleached shirts coming down a long line of clothes; and his daughter Verne had been fortunate in the inheritance from a distant relation of dresses which her untaught but skillful fingers touched into the fashion of the day.

It would not have been safe to hint that the Major was a "character," and to have found him amusing would have been a double find, the discovery at the same time of a fight on hand. Several years ago he went to Cuba to exchange shots with Colonel Duckworth, editor of the county paper, the cause of the journey being a paragraph asserting that Old Phil Killigrew, uncle of the Major, had, while under the influence of liquor, charged a traveler for a night's lodging. The Major was willing to admit the liquor but swore that unless the more serious charge was retracted or modified, blood must flow. The editor was obstinate, fought, and lost his right arm, but learned to write with his left hand and with it ably supported the Major for the legislature.

Verne was registered as the handsomest girl in the county. But as the martyrdom of starvation drew nearer, she became more exclusive. A Cincinnati merchant who had chanced to see her begged for an opportunity to lay his goods at her feet, and the owner of a great dairy farm swore that he would create for her a river of milk and dam it up with honey if she would marry him, but as love lay not in her way she did not find it.

There was one suitor more persistent than all the rest: Judge Scroggin, who, thirty years ago, had sat on the bench of the county court. His family was ancient, dating back to a time during the reign of Charles I when a certain Andrew Scroggin won the prize for grinning through a horse collar. The Major favored the Judge's suit, and this was why.

it might have been suspected, that so constantly there arose the threat of starvation: for like old *Justice Shallow*, this judge was possessed of land and beeves. He was old, tall, spare; he was bow-legged, having so long ridden a sway-backed horse; he laughed with a croak and smiled with a crack.

OFTEN had the Major said to Verne, "You must know that I married very late in life, and it is a matter of sweet remembrance that your mother was a happy woman: but it was the Lord's will to take her and leave me."

"Yes," she said, "and the Lord might take me and leave Old Scroggin. I am sure it would be that way."

"I don't think so, my child," said the Major, halting thoughtfully in his walk. "He is getting feebler every day and—" Feeling that he was exhibiting a mercenary paw, reaching after the Scroggin estate, the Major broke off. He cared nothing for the old man's money, freely acknowledged that he didn't, declaring that all he desired was a union of the two old families.

"But I can't possibly love him," she protested. "You call all Virginia to witness the romance of our family, how the women scorned matrimonial money and how the men fought for love, and yet you threaten me with starvation unless I marry an old man for his money."

The Major made a swift stride toward her, but halted and stood as if shaken by a great and sudden grief. "Oh, that I should ever hear a daughter of mine speak thus. Lord, Thou art surely scourging me now! . . . Verne, is it possible that I cannot bring you to understand the difference between the past and the present? Don't you know that all romance is dead?"

"Father, romance is always dead to the aged, always alive to the young."

The Major seized hold of a table to steady himself from falling. "Hear not her profanation, Lord," he supplicated. "Let not these ancient timbers fall down upon us. . . . Verne, I had hoped for a natural death, but this you, my only child, deny me. We have nothing left to sell except this house. Scoffers laugh at it and would pull it down and on the hallowed ground put up a painted Yankeeism of thin boards. With the thirty acres still remaining it wouldn't fetch enough to keep us from starving more than six months. But I swear to you that if its sale meant eternal freedom from want I would not let it go. So, you see, there is nothing left but starvation."

"Very well, then, Father, we starve. But let us make the martyrdom as attractive as we can. I will put on my cream silk and with my grandmother's pink sash about me will lie down on a snowy counterpane; and you, in your broadcloth with brass buttons—"

"Hush. Here comes Judge Scroggin."

The old jurist was coming up the walk, with a string of hounds streaming from his heels.

"Charmed, Miss Verne, to see you again," the visitor said, and cracked his face in a smile. Verne glanced at a clock, —it hadn't turned a wheel since she had been old enough to count the time of day,— arose and moved over toward the door. "You will please excuse me, but I have an engagement that must be kept."

The Major gasped, and the dead grass on the top of the Judge's steep poll threatened to take fire. What right had she to have an engagement? Had she not withdrawn from society? Was she not known throughout the county as the beauty of the cloister?

"Engagement?" demanded the Major. "May I be so ancient as to ask with whom?"

"Yes, Father, and I shall have to be so modern as to say with a friend."

The Major cleared his throat. "Perhaps I do not quite grasp it all. Has anyone presumed to enter upon my precincts and to—"

But she was out and gone. The two old men looked at each other. "Judge, the world has gone to the devil, sir. Find me a rope, please, and I will hang myself."

"Let us wait a little while longer, Major, and see what the world does next. But I quite agree with you that it has gone either to the devil or is meditating a last spurt in that direction. But let us wait and perhaps we can persuade

Miss Verne to see as we do. She may agree to marry me."

"Lord grant it," the Major echoed, feeling about his neck as if he were tying the rope.

"All along she has deplored the thought of marrying for money," the Judge continued, smiling upon the Major.

"Yes, blind and romantic creature," the Major muttered.

The Judge arose, approached the Major and laid a confident hand on his shoulder. "And I do not ask her to marry for money, but without a money consideration, my dear Major. I now ask her to marry me for myself alone. The fact is that a recent speculation has swept me off the earth, I might say, and all I have left is a sway-back horse and a few hounds. I am a pauper."

The Major shook himself from beneath the Judge's hand. "Out of my house, sir! What! Do you mean that you really thought my daughter would be your wife? Why, you grinning old skeleton, I'd see her starved first. Out with you!"

II

OTHER than an engagement with her own emotions, to get away from Old Scroggin, Verne had no appointment. Out in the freedom of the pure air and the sweet new warmth of the sun in May, she loitered beneath the old beech trees, sentinels left standing by the armies of the ages, marching slowly onward toward the camp of eternity. Here a quick-rippling rivulet dazzled the eye with its flashing facets, and over there an ancient Virginia creeper crept to the top of an oak to wreath its old brow in red. How out of all keeping with this thrill-scene was the life she led! Set forth in fantastic fiction it would have outstripped invention and made a mock of modern credulity. Expert testimony might have declared her father insane, but her education taught her that he was only the victim of two eras, the departing and the coming, grinding their edges together. But she knew, too, that this was something that she could not bring him to understand, and to bear with him was a part of the heroism of her race.

Now she drew near her old favorite, a beech on whose bark could be spelled out the names of swains who, fighting, fell in the Revolution. Always she approached this the oldest of all the sentinels with a song, a rugged hymn of battle for the Lord, taught her in early dawn by an old black mammy; and now she sang, but suddenly her song was broken off. From beneath the tree a young man leaped lightly to his feet and gracefully bowed to her. Not more was she embarrassed than if she had encountered a denizen of one of the cabins over on the hill, though at once was flashed upon her the manliness and the grace of this young fellow, an Indian in litheness and a dancing master in physical courtesy. This quick photograph of him, half humorous, tickled her countenance into a smile, not at him but at the picture of him; and she would have walked on without speaking, but now came his deep and mellow voice:

"I beg your pardon."

She had to laugh. "Why, what for?"

"For being in your path."

"You are not in my path: only on one side of it."

"Now that is true, you know. I hadn't thought of that. Astonishing how many deuced things a fellow doesn't think of, isn't it? Don't go, please; I should like to ask you a few questions if I may."

"Why should you?" But she halted.

"That is what I should like to find out, you know; I mean—"

"I don't believe you know what you mean."

"You know, I am beginning to feel that way myself? Astonishing, isn't it?"

SHE looked at him. "You are not only a stranger here but an Englishman."

"But not a double crime, let us hope. Yes, you see, they gave me what they termed a scientific education and set me adrift. Permit me to offer you this chair, one of the most artistic I have ever seen." And he pointed to the roots of the tree, fancifully interwoven.

"It is my favorite seat," she said and sat down.

"Then you must live about here."



"Engagement?" demanded the Major. "May I be so ancient as to ask with whom?"

"Just about," she laughed.

"I don't gather, quite."

"Probably because you are a rolling stone."

"Good, by—I came in one of saying '—Jove.' Then you do live here. For the most part America is not beautiful. It is, I might say, too destructive of itself. But this place is charming. I walked out from the beastly little town, and—"

"The town is not beastly."

"Oh, if you say not, that alters its complexion, you know."

"How absurdly delightful you are."

"Say that again, Miss, and leave off the *absurdly.*"

"Then I'd not be speaking the truth. You wouldn't want me to tell a fib."

"Oh, yes, I'd want you to tell anything so long as you are talking, you know."

"You don't try to be funny, do you?"

"Lord, no. Am I? Teach me to be grewsome if you like it better. At home, you know, they told me that I was too serious for the church, so they set me at

science, but I find it a great joke. I have an uncle that's a bishop, most humorous old codger I ever saw. He waits till his congregation goes to sleep and then takes a nap himself and wakes up much refreshed. He wrote a hymn—I have forgotten the name, but you may have heard it..... Really, I try to be serious with you, but you make my heart laugh, you know."

She shook her head, pretending not to like it, but she did. It was as fresh as morning rain and as honest as the talk of a boy. "How long have you been over here?" she inquired.

"Only a few weeks. At home they told me that I should have no trouble in finding paying employment here. Deuced little they know. But fortunately I have clothes enough to last me for a time."

She laughed. "That is a joke I can share with you," she said.

"Oh, in this country it is a joke to have plenty of clothes, is it? It is a joke I hope I may always be able to take. I beg your pardon, but I have been in and around society a bit, but I have never seen so—let me say gladsome a woman as yourself. Jove, you make me feel like wanting to shout, you know. Come to think of it, however, how rash all this is on my part, since I am in a country that can find nothing respectable except money."

"You are not rash, since I am as poor as you can possibly be. We own this place, but that seems to make us poorer. And up in that old ancestral home of mine, where Charles II was proclaimed before they dared to shout his name in the streets of London, my father is discussing my marriage to an old fool that I despise."

THE Englishman flew into a wordless passion. Up and down the path he trod, striking right and left with his cane. Then he came back, meek with apology. "I beg your pardon," he said, "but some things are enough to make a saint rave, and I have never been sainted, you know. You must not marry that old man—or any other man—I mean any other old man, no matter if he's as rich as Rockeysmith."

"You mean Rockefeller."

"Ah, perhaps I do. Old age is delightful when it acknowledges itself, but ridiculous when it tries to be young. What manner of man is this they want you to marry—a Cabinet officer?"

"No, he's an old sneak."

"I warrant you. Well, you tell him I say he can't have you."

"But I dont know who you are," she replied, laughing.

"And neither have I, for the last fifteen minutes. My name is Arthur Tremayne."

"I am Verne Killigrew."

"Oh, you don't say. One of my grandmothers was a Killigrew—boasted of her long line of piratical ancestry."

"Same family," she said. "Some of them sailed with John Hawkins."

"By Jove, that's exactly what my old grandmother said. Shrewd old lady, wasn't she? I should like to meet your people."

"I have only my father, and I don't wish you to meet him just at present."

"Oh, I can wait—as long as my clothes hold out, you know. What, must you be going? This, however, doesn't mean that I am banished, does it? Wont you please stroll along here again? Any time; it makes no difference when; and I fancy you'll find me here."

"I can't make any promises. Good-by."

III

FOUR weeks passed, and the Major's prospects had not improved. Scroggin came back once, as near as the big gate, and there astride his old mare he essayed to shout a renewal of his claim, but the Major had shouted back to him: "Go on away, Scroggin, while your health's good. I have looked up your family history, and I don't believe any of your progenitors ever won a prize by grinning through a horse collar."

One morning Verne told her father that a Mr. Tremayne would call that day to speak to him about renting the place. He replied that the place was not worth renting, but that if any man were fool enough to take over the thirty acres of land apart from the house, all right. Then he looked at her quizzically.

"Tremayne! Who is he?"

"Oh, I met him casually not long ago. And I am sure of one thing: he is a perfect gentleman, a little eccentric you may think, but—"

"Eh? Eccentric? I don't like eccentric men. But when it comes to business I can be as eccentric as the rest of 'em. I will speak of something to you, but business on our part demands that he shall know nothing about it. Our famous old spring over there by the edge of the timber is ruined with a peculiar sort of pollution. For some time, and especially after a rain, I have noticed that the water is not fit to drink; but as I say, business demands that he must not be told."

"But Father, do you think that is fair to Mr. Tremayne?"

"My daughter, if business did not seek an advantage, there would be no profit and consequently no commercial progress. But I am not yet satisfied as to how you know so much about a man who is evidently a stranger in our community. Renting land is one thing, while knowing whether or not a stranger is a gentleman is quite another."

"One of his grandmothers was a Killigrew. He is an Englishman and has been over here but a short time."

"You don't say? Well, now there may be something to him. And come to think of it, there was a baron or a count or some big Tremayne who had something to do with Ireland during Elizabeth's reign. Wealthy, no doubt."

"Well, no. He told me that he was very poor, but I gathered that he didn't expect to remain always in that condition."

"Hah, but he will if he expects to get anything out of my land."

TREMAYNE came, and the Major in his broadcloth with brass buttons met him most graciously. The Englishman wished to get down to business at once, but the Major held him back with family tradition. The girl stole away, was gone a long time, and then while a blighting saw-mill was shrieking the hour of noon, she came in to invite Tremayne out to dinner. In his excitement the Major flapped the tails of his broadcloth coat. Such a thing as inviting a visitor to eat was a dim recollection in that household, and the old man began to frame an apology, but his daughter cut him off, gracing Tremayne toward the dining-room. They sat down to roasted gander and crackers.

"This gander has been in the family for a long time," said Verne, handing the carving knife to her father. "I am not sure but he may have sailed with John Hawkins himself. At any rate he was the last of his race, and we sacrificed him partly because he was lonesome but mainly because we needed something to eat. I don't know whether you like gander or not, Mr. Tremayne, but—"

"Oh, tremendously fond of it," the young fellow broke in. "My grandmother Killigrew always fed me on gander when I went to see her. I got so, you know, that I didn't care to eat anything else. And one of the prospective hardships pointed out to me when I sailed for America was that I might not be able to get any gander here."

"But he's so infernally tough," growled the old man.

"Oh, not at all, I assure you, Major. Really I prefer tough gander. He has more—more history, you might say."

Standing, and with a mighty effort, the Major wrenched a leg off the stubborn fowl. "Look out," he cried as a splash of gravy flew in the Englishman's direction.

"Avoided it, thank you. But don't you think that a saw would be better. Grandmother always used one."

THE Major flung down his dignity and roared, and the mischievous girl ran to the window to shout her laughter out into the yard. It was a long time before they quieted down, and when they did they found themselves in the midst of business. The Major said that he would let the thirty acres go for ten dollars a month.

Now the Englishman was serious. "You may not understand the proposition I shall make. But here it is: I will have papers drawn up agreeing to pay you one thousand dollars a month in advance each month for five years."

The old man leaned forward on the table, trembling. The girl was standing at the window, looking out. "Please re-



"Really, I try to be serious with you, but you make my heart laugh, you know." She shook her head,



pretending not to like it, but she did. It was as fresh as morning rain and as honest as the talk of a boy.

peat that, a little slower, Mr. Tremayne."

Tremayne repeated it. The old man leaned back. "Sir," he said, "there may be jokes at a dining table, at a funeral, even; but please don't joke with a proud old man who feels the world slipping from beneath his tired feet."

The visitor reached over and gently put his hand on the Major's arm. "I hope that I know when to joke, sir, and when to be serious. And in all seriousness I make you this offer. To-morrow I will bring to you a certified check from the bank. I shall also bring all necessary papers and an attorney. Major, and Miss Killigrew, I bid you good afternoon."

FOR a time after the Englishman departed the house the Major sat brooding, visions of restored prestige floating through his mind. Then suddenly he turned toward his daughter. "You told me he was poor. If he is, how can he bring me a thousand dollars tomorrow? He is touched in the head, and here I am, permitting an insane man to put a dream into my mind."

"Don't worry, Father. I believe he will be here with the check."

"No, it cannot be. Put on your grandmother's silk and sash, and we will prepare for the martyrdom of starvation."

She sought to soothe him but could give him no cause for her faith in the chimerical stranger; and all during the remainder of the afternoon he fretted about the house, and in the night she heard him walking up and down the room. But early in the forenoon, next day, Tremayne came with his papers and his attorney, and, moreover, with a check for a thousand dollars certified by the palsied but potent cashier of an ancient bank in Staunton. Upon the tick of the moment, when all arrangements had been settled, the Major hastened away to town, and in the evening returned with a straw hat valued at fifty cents and a blooded horse for which he had paid nine hundred dollars.

"My dear, a gentleman has to have a blooded horse," he explained when Verne had mildly taken him to task. "Blooded horses have galloped all down through our family history, and I am astonished that you complain when kindly Fate leads this beautiful charger to our long-neglected door."

He got a tub of water and stood the horse with his fore feet in it for half an hour. Then he took out the fore feet, turned the horse about and immersed his hind feet. Then with a handful of old lace found somewhere in a drawer he rubbed his charger down, calling him pet names.

BUT what was this going on at the old spring that had been polluted? Teamsters were unloading a mighty derrick; the Englishman standing about, giving orders. All night the work went on, and in the morning there was heard the puffing of a steam engine, and a drill was seen, boring into the earth. The Major was so busy with his horse that he paid not much attention. But he said to Verne: "If that fellow expects to find good water there he'll come off worsted."

"He's not after water. Father, haven't you guessed that it's oil?"

"Oil! And that's what polluted the spring. Ah, here comes Tremayne now."

The Englishman bade them a pleasant good morning. "We have just struck, near the surface, one of the finest oil gushers in this country," he said. "But hold off the expression of your astonishment till I finish my story, Major."

"You see, I was hanging around here to catch sight of some one — couldn't stay away no matter how hard I tried— and one day I took a drink of beastly water out of that big spring. 'What is this?' I said. And having been in Russia for a spell, I thought about oil. I wrote a letter to England, using the full force of my—my amity, and got a letter of credit. Then I hired an expert from Oklahoma, and here we are. I—er—I am not going to ask you for Verne now," he continued, encircling the girl with his arm. "We'll put that off a bit. Wont we?"

She laughed her mischievous answer while the Major stood gasping in astonishment. "But I say, Major, we are going to have the swellest wedding dinner you ever saw; and, for the sake of variety, you know, I don't think we'll have old gander."



Luigi

The House of a Thousand Murders

By Arthur B. Reeve

Author of "Craig Kennedy," etc.

DID you ever realize that typewriting shows personality almost as clearly as penmanship? Of course you didn't. But it is by grasping just such little points that Guy Garrick solves mysteries—and makes mighty good reading.

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE BREHM

The hand that has killed the others will get you yet. It is only a question of time. Your death warrant is signed by LA MANO NERA.

"LA MANO NERA—the Black Hand!" exclaimed Garrick, reading the crudely typewritten sheet of paper which a short, stocky Irishman laid before him.

As he took the note from his visitor, he noticed that the forefinger of the man's hand was gone. A hasty glance had disclosed a peculiar, nervous twitching of his face, and marks that looked as if gun powder had pitted his skin.

"Yes, Mr. Garrick, the Black Hand," repeated the visitor breathlessly. "I received it to-day. I have heard of you and I thought that perhaps you would take up the case. I can pay you, sir—not out of city funds, but from a special fund that has been given me by Mr. Townsend Cooke, of Rockcrest, to catch—"

"And you are?" interrupted Garrick, looking up inquiringly at the man.

"Dennis Riley—expert in infernal machines, specialist in the dissection of bombs, student of everything ready to burst and blow things to kingdom come," the man replied.

Garrick nodded. "Dennis Riley of the Bureau of Combustibles, then?" he queried.

"The same," replied Riley, obviously flattered. "No one wants my job, I guess," he added whimsically. "That's probably what the people who wrote the note count on. They seem to think that if they can get rid of me, they will be free to do everything they choose—and, sir, that's plenty!"

"But about Townsend Cooke," prompted Garrick. "How does a millionaire broker figure in it?"

"Why, it's like this," began Riley: "There has been an epidemic of bombs up there in the rich colony at Rockcrest on the Hudson. First it was the employees on the estates. Now, since some of their employers are fighting to protect them, the letter-writers and bomb-throwers have gone higher up for revenge. There have been all kinds of killings among the Italians—I couldn't say off hand how many. But the question is now, will it be one of the millionaires next?"

"Cooke hasn't been threatened, himself, has he?" asked Garrick quickly.

Riley leaned over excitedly. "A bomb was sent to him last night," he exclaimed. "Fortunately it didn't explode. But here is the address on the package as it was mailed at the general post office, here in New York."

Riley produced a typewritten label from his capacious wallet, and Garrick fairly pounced on it, studying it carefully.

"I have taken the bomb," Riley went on, "as well as others—what was left of the exploded ones, and another that was sent to one of the men and did not explode. I have analyzed and catalogued them. And, Mr. Garrick," he concluded, "there is a gang of blackmailers and extortioners at work—men of daring and great mechanical skill, as well as practical knowledge of explosives. They must be caught before they do any more damage."

Garrick was glancing eagerly from the letter to the typewritten label.

"Mr. Cooke called me in," pursued Riley, "and then came this threatening letter to me. Often I've said to myself, 'Dennis, you'll get a bomb yourself some day—what'll you do?' So, I thought I'd just come around and see you."

GARRICK had meanwhile pulled out of his desk a transparent glass plate, ruled in regular little oblongs.

"That's right, Riley," he agreed. "People, especially public officers, receive lots of threatening letters, and too often they throw them away. I'm glad you brought this to me."

He was carefully examining both letter and label under the ruled glass.

"Of course," apologized Riley, "I don't know who these bomb-senders are, and I suppose the letter isn't of much account as a clue, but I thought I'd better show it to you rather than to the police. If it had only been written, then it might—"

"On the contrary," interrupted Garrick, still poring over it, "I suppose you don't know, but there is an increasing use of the typewriter for such things. Most likely it is due to the false idea that typewriting somehow can't be identified. But the fact is that the typewriter is perhaps a worse means of concealing identity than is disguised handwriting.

"It doesn't afford the effective protection the criminal supposes—quite the opposite. It may be the direct means of tracing a letter to its source, of determining first the kind of machine on which the letter was written, then what particular individual machine was used. For instance, I can count the number of threads to the inch in the ribbon that was employed, and find out by my tintometer the exact color of it."

Riley was listening intently, as Garrick talked.

"Not only that, but this alignment test-plate enables me to study accurately the spacing and alignment of the typewritten characters. There are, in this pica type, ten to the inch, horizontally, and six to the inch, vertically. That is usual. Perhaps, too, you are not acquainted with the fact that typewritten characters are in line both ways, horizontally and vertically.

"Then there are nine possible positions for each character which may be assumed with reference to one of these little

standard squares of the test-plate. Not only that, but the faces of many letters inevitably become broken, worn, battered, as well as out of alignment, or slightly shifted in their position on the type-bar. The type faces are not flat, but a little concave to conform to the roller. There are thousands of possible divergences, scars, and deformities in the type of each machine."

Garrick was proceeding enthusiastically with his work of comparison.

"You cannot fail to appreciate what an immense impossibility there is, that one machine should duplicate all the breaks and variations out of the true, which the alignment test-plate detects on the characters of another machine. Why, typewriting has an individuality like that of the Bertillon system, the finger-print, or the celebrated *portrait parlé*.

"This writing, for example, is from a particularly old and battered machine. The label and letter came from the same source. The fact is, I could identify the sender—only, of course," he added, with a smile, "first, we must locate the machine."

Riley nodded, much impressed.

"Which means," added Garrick, "that we have only just taken up the case. Can you tell me any more about it?"

"I wish you could go out to Rockcrest with me," ventured Riley. "I'm sure you'd not regret meeting Mr. Cooke."

"I shall be glad to do so later, but, first, have these Black Handers no connections in the city?"

"Yes," replied Riley slowly, "the bomb to Mr. Cooke was mailed here, as I told you. I can't say how many of the hundreds of killings in the city are the work of this gang. But just now it is Rockcrest that is terrorized."

Garrick already knew something of Townsend Cooke—a big man, big of stature and big in action.

"The Cooke place covers hundreds of acres," went on Riley. "At present perhaps fifty men are employed in grading it over at one end. It was the blackmailing of these men that started the trouble, as nearly as I can find out. I have been observing the men at work about the place. Among them is one Giuseppe, the contractor, whose refusal to pay blackmail, in which he was supported by Mr. Cooke, has precipitated the trouble on the Cooke estate."

"I should like to see Giuseppe," mused Garrick.

"I suppose he is in the city now," put in Riley. "At least, I have heard mention now and then among the men under him of a little wine-shop kept by Luigi on Mulberry Street."

"Would you like to take me there?" asked Garrick. "Will you go with me?"

"I—go with you?" gasped Riley. "Why, man alive, they all know me down there, and they'd shoot both of us, merely on sight. I'll help you all you want in any other way. But you simply might just as well invite suicide, as myself."

"Thanks—no!" laughed Garrick. "Very well, then, I'll go alone. Only keep in touch with me, Riley, and as soon as I have anything to report, I'll let you know."

The bomb expert had risen and now departed with profuse expressions of gratitude to Garrick.

HALF an hour later, Garrick shouldered his way through the crowded streets, pulsing with life, walking east through the hurly-burly of races until he came to Mulberry Street.

On he went past the little shops, decked with flags and huge streamers of cheap red, white and blue, and red, white and green,—America and Italy entwined,—for it was a feast day. One by one, the lights in the windows were winking up, making the scene more picturesque than ever.

Circumspectly he dodged the swarms of children in this colony of hundreds of thousands of Italians—a population within the metropolis greater than that of many cities in their native land—of whose life most of New York knew little and cared little.

At last, glancing from right to left for the place, he came to Luigi's, a little wine-shop, dark, evil, malodorous.

He entered. Several customers were standing and sitting about. Luigi himself was a greasy, lowering fellow with beady, black, cunning eyes.

"Where can I find Giuseppe, the contractor?" he asked by way of introduction. "I have a job for him to figure on."

Luigi shrugged his shoulders. "He might come in," was his brief and surly answer.

Garrick said he would wait a little while, ordered something, and sat down.

A sinister-looking man, with a sort of unscrupulous intelligence, was writing at a table not far from him. As he wrote he puffed at a cheap cigar with a straw through it.

Garrick sat and smoked and sipped at the "red ink," careful not to seem too observant. This was indeed the *mala vita*.

As Garrick watched furtively, Luigi from time to time went into a back room to serve other customers. It was after one of these trips that he beckoned to the ominous-looking man at the table, as if some one had come in and inquired for him. The man rose quickly and went into the back room.

Garrick, under pretense of seeking a match, shifted his position. Through the half-open door, he could see the man talking to a girl, a pretty girl, whose face, however, was marred by the too-evident marks of dissipation.

Garrick lounged back to his original seat.

A moment later Luigi returned to his customers in the front room. Again Garrick rose and this time sought to engage him in conversation.

"I've got a tract of land down on Staten Island," he explained, placing it as far as possible from Rockcrest. "There's a lot of work to be done, grading and filling in. I wonder if our friend who was sitting over here"—he motioned casually toward the place that the man had just vacated—"knows anything of where I could find Giuseppe?"

Luigi shot a suspicious glance which was not lost on Garrick, but Garrick's obvious sincerity evidently disarmed him. Strangers always excited suspicion in Luigi's, especially strangers of another race.

Most naturally, Garrick too had turned in the direction of the door through which the man had gone, caught sight of the girl, then turned slowly to Luigi with a smile.

"I guess he has something better to do," he laughed.

Luigi grunted.

FROM his position now, Garrick could see the couple talking earnestly. It was apparent that the woman thought much of the man, and that he regarded her with a sort of jealous pride.

At last, at the end of the conversation, the man rose, went out by a side door, and left her alone, evidently intending to return shortly.

Garrick glanced in through the door, and could not resist smiling at her.

Instantly, Luigi, watchful, leaned over with a frown.

"She is Francesca—Dominico's girl," he remarked savagely. "Once she was what you call a stenographer and typewriter—a fine girl. Now she does not have to work—he gives her everything—American dresses, hires automobiles—everything."

Garrick merely raised his eyebrows a fraction of an inch. "Is Dominico a contractor?" he asked with apparent innocence.

Luigi laughed loudly at the very idea. Garrick took it good-naturedly, but did not pursue the subject.

It was, as he had noticed, the evening of a feast day. The whole Italian colony crowded the streets with merrymakers.

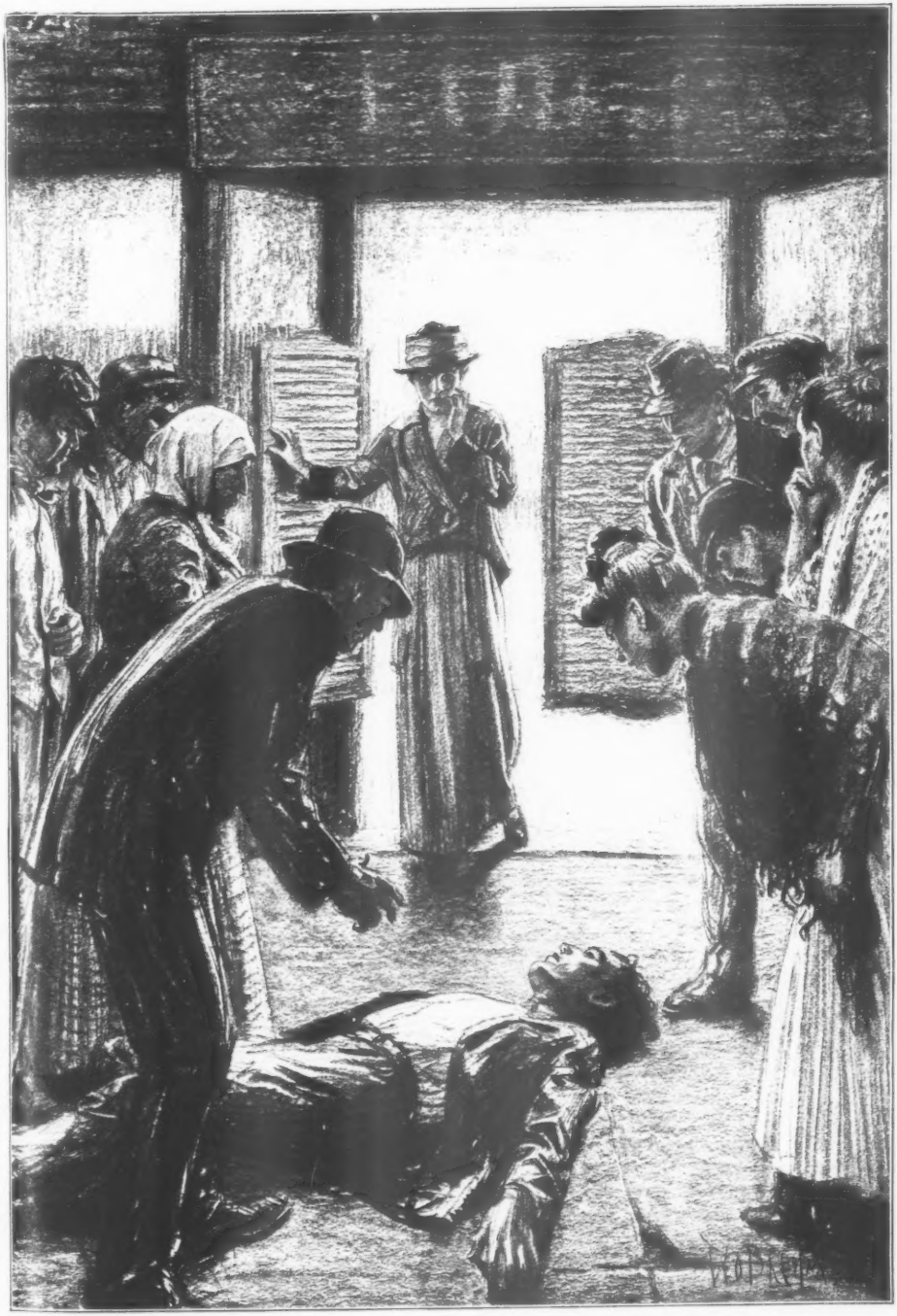
A keen observer, if he had been outside Luigi's, however, might have noticed three men threading their way through the revelers in the direction of the little wine-shop.

Suddenly, without any warning, above the babble of voices in the street, a volley of shots rang out.

The gay throngs were immediately thrown into panic. They rushed for safety from the flying bullets.

Garrick, inside the shop, sprang up from the seat which he had resumed, and rushed to the door.

A man had fallen on the sidewalk, almost in front of the shop. He was quickly surrounded by others, excitedly calling for a priest. Women knelt in the street and invoked vengeance of the



Suddenly, from the doorway of the wine-shop rushed the figure of a young woman.

saints on the slayers. Men sought eagerly for a doctor, for a policeman.

"Kill them!" cried some one, more excitable than the rest, without any very clear idea whom to kill.

The three assassins, however, had disappeared, even before the cry for a mob had been thought of. It was just one of those sudden shooting affrays which the gangs seem to be able to pull off with impunity, if they act boldly and unexpectedly. Yet the mob did form and seemed likely to prove dangerous. And as mobs are always unreasonable, it was not unlikely that Luigi's might in some way obtain an unsavory publicity out of it.

"He is a Black Hander! Beware *la Mano Nera!*" cried a gruff voice behind Garrick.

It was Luigi himself, shouting above all the rest. It was wonderful to see the effect of the words. As if by magic, the women shrank back, and the men stilled their cries for help. In the excitement, Luigi himself seemed to fade away.

Suddenly, from the doorway of the wine-shop, as the crowd parted enough to disclose the heap on the sidewalk, rushed the figure of a young woman, dropping down by the body with a piercing cry of anguish.

It was Francesca.

There the woman knelt on the sidewalk over the man. The first surprise over, the crowd surged forward again.

Wildly, she was putting the knuckle of the forefinger of her right hand into her mouth, and biting it until the blood flowed.

"It is the sign!" muttered some one beside Garrick.

He understood. She was openly declaring a vendetta against the murderers —the sign of a blood-feud.

A PATROLMAN arrived, on the run. The crowd scattered for him, and he too bent down over the prostrate figure, endeavoring to offer first aid.

It was too late. The man was dead on the pavement, deserted now by all those who a few minutes before had been crying so loudly for vengeance—all except one.

Garrick peered forward in the murky light. The man's cheeks were slit from mouth to ear, and his tongue was cleft.

He looked more closely: it was Dominico!

On him had been placed the dread mark of the Black Hand upon one who had talked too much.

What did it all mean? For the moment, Garrick saw nothing but the girl.

Quickly, it flashed through his mind that if the police got her, she would probably be detained as a witness and pressure would be brought to bear by the assassins or their friends to silence her. Another would be added to the host of inexplicable murders.

A priest arrived, and the policeman deferentially yielded to him. Garrick determined on a bold action.

Gently he reached over and touched the girl's elbow. She looked up, dazed, and seemed to recognize the face of the man who had smiled at her through the doorway. She made no outcry, as she would if she had been afraid of him.

"*Subito — l'urgenzia — polizia,*" he whispered.

She seemed to comprehend that the presence of the police was not indeed just the thing for her, and instinctively to turn to his offered aid in the emergency.

Quickly, in silence, the two managed to squeeze through the now rapidly-increasing crowd.

Crying hysterically, vowing vengeance, she seemed scarcely to know where she was, or what she was doing. Garrick endeavored to quiet her, so that they would not attract attention. They turned a corner, and breathed easier.

At last the fugitives came upon an East Side restaurant in the next avenue, much frequented by sightseers.

Garrick motioned to a cabman. Francesca entered, evidently now imbued with the one idea of getting away from the tragedy.

"UPTOWN—Fourth Avenue," he ordered the cabman, trying to show no haste, and thinking of the quickest way to get out of the East Side and into a changed environment.

The cab rolled along swiftly, every block a new guarantee of safety.



"Who are you?" he asked soothingly, at length. "I am your friend. Where can I take you?"

The girl was still sobbing hysterically in the corner of the cab.

"I am Francesca," she blurted out; "Francesca of the Dark Hair, they call me."

Garrick looked at her more closely as they passed an occasional street light. She was indeed beautiful. Her masses of dark hair had fallen over her eyes, and the excitement had flushed her cheeks. Night had drawn a veil over the marks of dissipation which the light in Luigi's had disclosed.

Garrick was thinking rapidly.

"You write on the typewriter," he shot out quickly.

Francesca looked up, startled.

"Labels—addresses—letters," he pursued, seeing his advantage. "It is an old typewriter, with the letters out of line and some of them broken."

She had stopped crying and now was regarding him almost with superstitious dread.

Though she said nothing, Garrick knew that he had guessed right. In some way she was connected with the Black Handers.

And yet, though he did seem to know something about her, intuitively she did not fear him, as she looked deeply into his eyes. In fact, the look on his face invited confidence, and from her own heart, which was bursting, she poured it forth.

"I am only twenty," she said in a low voice in answer to his continued questioning. "I loved Dominico and he loved me. I was forced into the gang—with the others. But I did it to help Dominico—not them."

"The gang—what gang?" questioned Garrick, as though he had never thought of such a thing before.

It did not interrupt her own train of thought, however. "I know now—have known for some time," she went on. "They have made me lure their victims—anywhere. I was useful to them. But it was Dominico I did it for."

She paused, controlling herself heroically. "They all wanted me," she continued bitterly. "Once Dominico and I ran away. But they found us and brought us back. Now, they think that because the authorities are after them, some one has snitched. But he did not tell—no—no—it was not Dominico. It was no one. No—they know it. It was only an excuse—to get me—all—for themselves. It was — the gang — they killed him," she wailed, trailing off into a low moan in Italian.

Garrick waited until the flood of her pent-up feelings had subsided.

"Who is the leader?" he asked softly.

"Gaetano—the Fox," she replied, unhesitatingly, and it was evident that she both feared and hated the man.

"Suppose the police had arrested you to-night," he suggested. "Would you 'snitch' for revenge?"

She bent her dark eyes on him. She said nothing, but merely pressed both temples with her thumbs, and drew her slim forefinger ominously under her chin and throat. Garrick understood that sign, too. It was the Black Hand signal which has shut up many a witness in the middle of his testimony, even in open court.

"Aren't you afraid to talk to me, then?" he ventured.

She looked at him frankly. "Yes," she murmured, "I am. But where shall I go? I can hide nowhere. They will find me—they found me before," she added, hopelessly.

JUST then a huge granite building loomed up before them. Something about it seemed to recall her to herself, to the cab, to the stranger with her. Garrick looked out of the window. They had reached the Grand Central Station.

He wondered whether the railroad had suggested flight. Another look told him that it had suggested just the opposite. There was evidently no part of the world where she felt she could go and be safe from the long arm of the Black Hand pursuit.

"Oh, sir," she cried. "You have been kind—very kind to me. But you had better let me go, before they—"

She cut the words short herself, as if language could not express the hypnotic terror of Gaetano and the rest.

Garrick leaned over closer to her.



"If they found the card, they might kill you."

"But you want revenge?" he whispered sharply into her ear.

The flash of hatred in the girl's dark eyes and the tense lines of her face told him that he had struck the right chord. Quickly, he took a card from his pocket and pressed it into her hand.

"Go back to them, then, if you are afraid to flee," he whispered. "If you need help at any time—you can get me always at that address."

She read the card and re-read it mechanically. Then she deliberately tore it up and threw the pieces out of the window.

"You will not, then?" he asked keenly.

"Yes—yes," she cried passionately, then tapped her forehead significantly. "It is there now," she said simply "If they found the card—they might kill you. I have memorized it. Give me another."

Tremblingly, she wrote. Garrick had stopped the cab so that the jolting might not make it more difficult for her.

"That is where I shall go," she said, handing the second card back to him. "I have a room at that little hotel in Westchester — Bardo's — not far from Rockcrest."

Garrick read it eagerly, and was about to ask a question, when impulsively she reached over and opened the cab door near the curb.

He did not attempt to restrain her, for she had placed the other hand in his, and was murmuring thanks that he knew were sincere. Instantly he had figured it out. It was better to have her a friend, within the organization, than a fugitive, without.

He returned the pressure with a clear, frank look. She seemed to appreciate it. Probably it was the first time she had ever had a man look at her that way.

Then, without a word, she disappeared in the throng entering the station, to take a train that would involve her again in the meshes of the web from which she could not escape.

IT was not until the next day, when Garrick reached his office, that he saw Riley again. The bomb-expert was waiting for him in a high state of excitement.

"Another bomb has been sent to Mr. Cooke," he blurted out, even before Garrick could say a word about the strange succession of events through which he had gone the night before.

"Have you opened it yet?" asked Garrick.

"No. I thought perhaps you would like to see it."

"Indeed I should," agreed Garrick. "Where is it?"

"At my workshop," answered Riley, leading the way.

Briefly, as they sped up-town, Garrick detailed what had already happened; Riley listened with intense amazement.

At last, under the brow of a beetling tenement row, in a vacant lot surrounded by a high fence, Riley led him. There, in the middle of the lot, was a little brick house, with just one door and a small-barred, ground-glass window. It was not an unusual looking door, barred with iron and held by an innocent padlock. But there was something mysterious about it, nevertheless.

Riley entered. In the dim recesses of the secret magazine maintained by the Fire Department, was a collection of weird-looking messengers of death. Riley pointed out on a work-bench the package in question.

Garrick bent over it and read the address to Townsend Cooke. "The same typewriting!" he exclaimed.

Carefully, Riley set to work to open and dissect the bomb. "I don't put them in water," he remarked, as he worked, "and have given specific instructions at all station houses not to do so. A large number of bombs are chemical, and often if you put them in water that may be just what is necessary to set them off."

As he separated and analyzed it, it was evident that the bomb was of an unusual and clever construction. The whole arrangement was encased in a wooden box. The cover of the box, inside, was marked with skull and crossbones, and a huge black hand.

In the teeth of the skull were innumerable match-heads, so arranged that when the box was opened they would ignite the bomb.

As Riley separated the last of the constituents and laid each by itself in an innocuous pile, they shuddered at the diabolical cunning of the secret assassin. It was just one more piece of evidence that was piling up against him.

Late in the afternoon came a brief but urgent message from Cooke. Giuseppe, his contractor, had disappeared and there was no trace of him to be found. "Can you come out to Rockcrest immediately?" the message closed.

"It is time for action," exclaimed Garrick, who had been chafing at the hours of comparative inaction. "Tonight we must raid Bardo's."

Townsend Cooke more than ratified the action of Riley in calling in Garrick. In fact, he seemed disposed to place the case unreservedly in his hands. As Garrick sketched what he had found out already, Cooke was keenly interested. For what had formerly been merely a matter of pride in protecting his own men, was now a matter of life and death for himself.

"I don't dare trust to the local authorities," remarked the broker, as Garrick outlined his plan for the raid of Bardo's. "We'll do it ourselves — and they'll never get wind of it until we descend on them. No one can tip them off to that."

SO GREAT had been the terrorism at Rockcrest that already there was a small army of private detectives guarding the various estates. It was the work of only a few hours, therefore, to mass secretly a raiding force that could swoop down on Bardo's at any preconcerted moment.

Garrick waited, however, until well along in the evening, so that their movements might have as much cover as possible.

Then in three swift, high-powered cars, the posse shot out, and with engines muffled down, pulled up beside the road not far from the appointed place.

Bardo's was one of those squalid country taverns that have fallen to a viciously low estate. It was a frame building, on the first floor of which was a saloon. Above were two or three sleeping-rooms on the second floor, and a small attic.

Strange to say, not a light showed in the place as the raiders took their positions about it, half expecting to be welcomed at any minute by a volley of shots from the desperate characters that were believed to be within.

At a signal they closed in on it. Still not a sound. The doors and windows were barred. Now that they had made an overt attack, no time was to be wasted. Law or no law, Garrick and Riley bore down the front door, off its hinges. Still not a sound, save the echoes. Not a light.

Bardo's was deserted!

Could it have been that Francesca, after all, had started him off on a blind trail? Garrick, pocket-flash in hand, hastily rushed through the house. Where was Francesca? She was not up-stairs.

"There, however, is the typewriter," he exclaimed, as he bent the rays of his light on an old and worn machine, and ran a sheet of paper through it, glancing keenly at the position and breaks in the characters it wrote.

Still, there was no one in the hotel, and no evidence of life. The raiders looked at each other blankly.

"The cellar!" cried Garrick.

Groping, stumbling, they made their way down the crazy, rickety stairs, fearful of what the dank air of the cavern might hide.

Garrick had found a switch and turned on an electric light.

A gruesome sight greeted them.

Hanging from a couple of hooks in a beam, was a body, strung up by its thumbs, horribly mutilated.

"Giuseppe!" cried Cooke, horror-stricken.

The raiders fell back in awe at the terrible discovery.

"Look!" exclaimed Riley, digging his knife into the wall back of him. "Pounds of lead bullets embedded here—not from bombs. Ah! I have it. Here the gang must have practised shooting."

Garrick seized a spade and was turning over some whitish earth in a corner.

"A mass of quicklime," he muttered, bending down.

In it, without a doubt, were human remains—unidentifiable, but not to be looked on without a shudder.

Side by side, almost, with the enormous wealth and the culture that existed at Rockcrest, was a condition of barbarism that rivaled the Middle Ages. Here it was that all the crimes of this band of Black Handers were plotted if not actually carried out—blackmail, extortion, arson, kidnaping, torture and even murder. Here at last were the headquarters of the gang that operated all over the country—the house of a thousand murders!

But Gaetano, the Fox, was gone. There was no trace of Francesca.

Had he carried her off with him, under the compulsion of fear, to some other hiding-place? Or — no one expressed the thought in words, but it was present in every mind—was the crowning crime the murder of the beautiful girl and the absolute destruction of the evidence in the quicklime of the cellar?

"What are we to do?" asked Cooke and Riley, together, looking helplessly at Garrick.

Garrick had been doing some quick thinking. "I'm prepared," he answered confidently. "They shall never get away. Some time ago I sent new instruments of mine to people I can trust in several cities—Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston—others. All I shall need is a leased telephone wire for a few minutes. This is one of the situations in which the organization of the regular police is indispensable."

BACK in the city again that night, Garrick, through the police, issued a general alarm, country-wide. Everywhere that the net could be spread, lines were out.

One of the first things he had decided on was a watch of Luigi's. To the surprise of everyone, it was reported that Luigi too had disappeared. Nor had the police any trace whatever of the three assassins who had so ruthlessly shot down Dominico, one of their own number, within hearing of the girl the band had wanted so much for their own purposes.

Down in his office, Garrick had set up a peculiar instrument and had made arrangements for the leasing at short notice, of a telephone wire to almost any part of the country.

That night and far into the morning he was working over a peculiarly complicated mechanism consisting of electro-magnet rolls, and a stylus. With the most minute care and precision, he ad-

justed a delicate piece of clock-work which formed a part of the apparatus.

The next morning saw him at Rockcrest again, with Cooke and Riley, looking over Bardo's in the daylight. There was little additional evidence, except that in a room which had apparently been occupied by Francesca, there were evident marks of a struggle. What it signified could not be guessed.

The ransacking of the place was far from complete when a swift roadster from Cooke's pulled up and the driver hopped out, calling breathlessly, "There's just been a message from the Boston police. They received an anonymous letter telling them to watch two men who are sailing for Genoa this morning. They have no evidence against them, and are afraid to detain them, for fear of damages for false arrest."

"An anonymous letter," thought Garrick to himself. "Could Francesca be having her revenge?"

"Two men?" repeated Riley, in a tone that grated on Garrick's nerves.

"What's to be done?" asked Cooke, looking at the detective blankly. "I'd spend anything to get that Gaetano—but here it's a case of something more than money—a miracle!"

Garrick did not answer. They clambered into the roadster, and hurried to the nearest town. There Garrick fumed until he got long distance and was in touch with his agent in Boston, a young man named Clark. A brief conversation followed, and a few minutes later Garrick was speeding to his office with Cooke and Riley.

"What's all this?" asked Cooke, indicating the magnets, rolls, and clockwork, as they entered the office at last.

Before Garrick could answer, his own telephone tinkled.

"Hello," he answered. "Yes—this is Garrick. Hello, Clark. It's all arranged at this end, too. Have you a good connection? Bully! My synchronizer is working fine here, too. All right, old man—shoot!"

AS Garrick gave the final touches to the peculiar apparatus on the table, the cylindrical drum began slowly to revolve, and the stylus, or needle, pressed down on a roll of sensitized paper, with which the drum was covered, apparently with varying intensity as it turned.

Around and around the cylinder revolved, like a strange sort of graphophone.

"This, Mr. Cooke," cried Garrick excitedly, "is the electric eye—the telelectrograph, invented by the Englishman, Thorne Baker. It at last makes possible the electric transmission of photographs, using the telephone wires because they are much better fitted for it than the telegraph."

Cooke and Riley were watching eagerly. Slowly the stylus traced out the beginning of a picture on the paper. It was only a thin band, now, yet, line by line, it widened. Still, they could not guess what it was about to reveal as the ceaseless revolutions widened the print.

"There is a brand new field opened by these various systems of long distance vision," Garrick explained as they gathered about, thrilled. "It will revolutionize detective work some day."

"What is this telelectrograph?" queried Cooke.

"In the Baker apparatus," answered Garrick slowly, "the various steps are not so difficult to understand, after all. First an ordinary photograph is taken and a negative made. Clark has done that, with the aid of the Boston police. Then a print is made and a wet plate negative is printed on a sheet of sensitized tinfoil which has been treated with a single line screen.

"Perhaps I'd better say a word about that. You know, an ordinary half-tone consists of a photograph through a screen, composed of perpendicular lines—a coarse screen for newspaper work, and a fine screen for better work, such as in the magazines. Well, in this case, Clark uses a screen composed of lines running parallel in one direction only, instead of crossing at right angles. An ordinary half tone is composed of minute points, therefore, some light, some dark. This print is composed of long lines, some shaded in part light, in part dark, giving the effect of a picture—such as artists often draw as freaks just to show how clever they are at shading."

Garrick paused to adjust the machine,

and Cooke nodded to him to go on.

"Well," he resumed, as the print before them widened visibly, "this tinfoil negative is wrapped around a cylinder at the Boston end of the line, and a stylus with a very delicate sensitive point begins passing over it, crossing the parallel lines at right angles—like the other lines of the regular newspaper or magazine half-tone.

"Whenever the point of the stylus passes over one of the lighter spots on the photographic print, it sends a longer electrical vibration; over the darker spots, a shorter vibration. The ever-changing electrical current passes up through the stylus and vibrates with varying intensity over the hundreds of miles of telephone wire between Boston and this instrument here at the other end of this special line."

"Wonderful!" ejaculated Cooke, much impressed.

"In this receiving apparatus the current causes another stylus to pass over a sheet of sensitized chemical paper, such as we have here. The receiving stylus passes over the paper here synchronously with the transmitting stylus in Boston.

"The impression that each stroke of the receiving stylus makes on the paper is black or light, according to the length of the quickly varying vibrations of the electric current transmitted to it.

"White spots on the photographic print come out here as black spots on the sensitized paper, over which the stylus before us is passing—and vice versa. In that way, you can see, the positive print grows here before your very eyes as the picture is transmitted from the negative which Clark has prepared and is sending us from Boston. We shall soon know now who these men are."

"I wonder whether it can be Gaetano and Luigi, or other members of the gang?" speculated Riley.

GARRICK said nothing. Uppermost in his mind was what had become of Francesca. He tried to put out of his thoughts the possibility that hers might have been the body destroyed in the quicklime in the cellar.

They bent anxiously over to see what the telelectrograph was doing. It was indeed reproducing faithfully in New York what mortal eye otherwise could see only in Boston.

Gradually the picture began to take form. As it did so Garrick watched it carefully.

The machine had ceased to revolve. Garrick stripped the still wet photograph off the telelectrograph and stood regarding it with surprise.

"Luigi!" he exclaimed, slapping down the now dry print that had come in by the "seeing over a wire" machine.

He was plainly mystified. Who was the other—Gaetano? Where was Francesca?

The machine had started again.

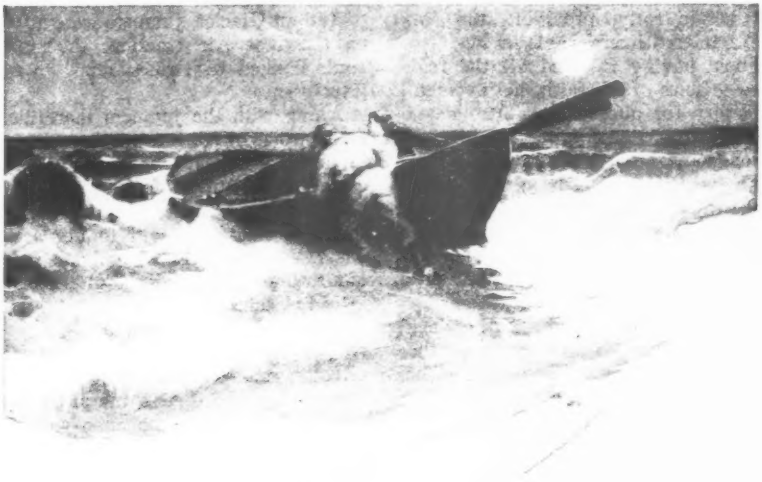
Slowly the second picture was printed.

It was of a young man, handsome. Surely that was not Gaetano.

Garrick uttered a low exclamation. Suddenly disappointment had turned into intense satisfaction.

"Don't you see?" he cried excitedly. "Luigi himself is Gaetano—the Fox. He was carrying her off, disguised. Look at the features. That is Francesca. Her anonymous note gave the clue. She is revenged at last!"

NEXT month The Red Book will introduce a new writer of detective stories to American readers. Frank Froest is his name, and he is an Englishman with an abundant knowledge of that wonderful institution, Scotland Yard. The stories are different from any ever printed in this country, and we have found them absorbing.



The Man Who Was Afraid

By Berthe Knatvold Mellett

Author of "The Woman From Three Above," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK B. HOFFMAN

THE story of the man who stopped in his search for Alaskan gold to reach down to raise a woman from the depths—and then lost his nerve.

"WHY are you not going? Are you afraid?"

The woman was guiltless of anything but curiosity, and a certain tremulous hope that perhaps he *was* afraid.

But the man across the breakfast table flushed purple, and the veins on his forehead gathered into knots as he rose to his feet.

"No, I am not afraid! Curse you!"

An alarmed Jap boy, tray in hand and teeth gleaming in a conciliatory smile, hastened in from the kitchen. When there was swearing he was usually on hand, an interested and non-resistant target. But "the boss" was already gone when he arrived, and "she," speaking low and steadying herself by a chair, ordered the table cleared.

King Shores had won Eve Baldwin fairly enough—won her away from Jack Mortimer at Circle City. And having won her, he married her. Partly he had done this to sate a passion for possession of a young and splendid animal, partly in fulfillment of a creed, half Far North and half New England, which permitted

any heroic folly, providing the folly were rendered irretrievable by law.

Then, having fulfilled all the registered articles of his faith, he invented a purgatory for himself as a fitting complement—a purgatory of self pity and jealousy and bitterness and shame.

The woman, having been won, capitulated entirely. The fine spirit, the brave boyishness which had made her the pal and little brother of the very men who sought her womanhood with their gold, disappeared. Cave woman, dragged to her lord's lair by the hair of her head, was never more abjectly enslaved than was Eve Baldwin when she put Jack Mortimer and Circle City behind her, let the brown shadow deepen and lengthen at the roots of her gilded hair, and was married to King Shores by the priest at Rampart.

Now, after he had gone, she sought the bare little room which constituted luxury in the Nome of those days. An anguish to pray, to say something, anything, to the sardonic Deity who, remote and untouched, must some place be threading out the pitiful pattern of her destiny, dragged at her knees. But a distaste for play-acting, even to herself, resisted the impulse. She dropped on her bed, her face turned toward the single window, her body sick with the bruise on her soul. Behind her, Bering Sea boomed its deep diastole of loneliness. A malamute tethered to a tent peg howled and mourned next door. Numbness, the ancient anæsthesia of weary women, stole over her, and her eyes, uncomprehending, encompassed the distances.

Out there loomed Anvil Rock, a tortured sphinx in a desert of soggy tundra, nursing its secret of gold from the beginning of time. Weaving their way, each following the lust of yellow metal where it led him on, men crossed and recrossed each other's paths. That microscopic stir on the rim of the world was the Discovery claim. Beyond the sight of the eye, but a vivid panorama to the optics of the memory, were One and Two Above, and on up to Eleven and Twelve. Branching off the main artery of gold were Specimen and Snow Gulch and Glacier Creek.

And on Glacier, jumpers were at work on the Hot Air fraction, their sluice boxes flanked with rifles, ready to resist interference.

Along with the jumpers there passed through her mind, like another fragment of a meaningless procession of nonessentials, recollection of the plot for their removal. Almost in the words in which it had been told to her she rehearsed the plan for the night: the organization of the Vigilantes—the leaders already selected — the rifles already cached at Discovery — the disguises already procured — the midnight train already chartered. Justice had moved slower than the dirt in the sluice boxes for so long in Nome that something swifter than justice had been devised. To-morrow all Nome would know of the Vigilantes. Vigilantes — the old legend of her California childhood—to-night to be enacted before her eyes!

Her weary thought came to a shuddering stop. By way of the jumpers, the plot and the Vigilantes, it had arrived at the happenings of the morning. Once again her pitiful efforts had failed. Always she gave offense—always she hurt and shamed and enraged when her one desire was to please, to find some avenue of understanding, to bridge with however frail a span the abyss that swam between her and the man.

She had asked if he were afraid, because terror smote upon her heart; because fear sighed in her doorway when she passed out, and resignation wept in her house when she came in. Had he been afraid, she could have dared to creep close, to put her cold hand in his and raise her white lips to his face. But instead of comfort she had sown offense. Instead of understanding she had reaped wrath.

SUDDENLY a panic of apology, a frenzy for pardon, came over her. She put on her sweater and went out. Down the dirty street, across the creaking bridge, over the sand-pit, she flew. The train for the creeks whistled. She caught it and dropped to a bench on the flat-car that served for a passenger carrier. Two women recognized her, and took seats forward. She did not notice. It

had been a long time ago, back in the days when she attended school and visited homes—away back before that flood of degradation when her mother's profession became known—that women had sat beside her.

From Discovery she turned off in the direction of Specimen. She saw him as she mounted the divide between the creeks. He stood tall and broad, his hands in his pockets, shouting directions to his foreman. There were visitors—two women and a man. She hardly saw them. Her pace accelerated itself automatically, and she came running down the divide, all the old litheness of her body in play. For a moment he saw only her, and the buoyant, vivid beauty of her, and his eyes narrowed in appreciation. Then the man at his side made excuses and hastened his wife and daughter away. When she reached him, the knots stood out on his forehead again, and his fists were clenched.

"Where did you come from? Can't I get away—even here?" he panted.

"I came because I am sorry. Oh my dear, my dear, I am so sorry."

He stooped to pick up the pan and shovel with which he had been sampling the dirt of the side hill, and she went on:

"You said you were not going with them to-night, and I was so glad. I thought maybe—maybe I was the reason, maybe you wouldn't risk anything so precious to me as you are, maybe—oh my dear, you know the things I want to say to you, and can't."

He turned on her, dropping the pan and shovel with a metallic clatter. "Yes, I know the things you want to say—and I came here so I wouldn't have to hear them. Afraid—you think I'm afraid of hell itself when I'd take you, and face the world with you—tied like a dragging corpse of sin behind me? You think I'm afraid of armed jumpers or law, after I've done a thing like that? Well then, just to show you, I'm going with them to-night. There'll be eleven of us, and if there's one less afraid than I am, I'll take you out to Maine and introduce you to my mother to complete my shame. And now you know where I stand, get back where I wont have to look at you in the light of day."

THAT night, she watched from the window as he strode away from the house. Darkness had hardly reclaimed the Northern nights, and it was a long time before the booted figure in slicker and sou'wester was blotted up in the surrounding shadows.

He had not gone armed. His revolver had been elaborately delivered to the Jap boy for cleaning at dinner, with instructions to return it in the morning. And he had established support for another alibi. Three men had come in by invitation for poker in the evening, and he had left so instantly upon their departure that an observer from a neighboring window might have sworn he was one of the number.

He had not spoken to her at dinner, nor during the evening. She had returned from the claim, stunned, stumbling, pulsing with a grief that choked her heart. Just as she was without the stimulant of resentment, she lacked the opiate of self vindication. She owned the truth of his words. She was the corpse of sin dragging behind him whithersoever he went. What wonder his soul was nauseated, and that he cried out in protest.

All through the ghostly night she sat, thinking her thoughts of pain, setting her desolation to the meter of the vast weary sea, and watching for the thickening of the shadows of the street to his outline.

He came with the morning. His hand was scarcely on the latch before she was there—and he came slinking through an alley to the back door.

When she saw him the pain went out of her heart—for he needed her now. He carried one hand before him. It was wrapped in a blood-stained rag. But it was not the wounded hand she saw. His face was white, and his eyes strained toward her, blind with terror. He would have dropped, but she caught him and drew him in and closed the door. Realizing his fears, she began to answer his unuttered questions.

"Nugi is not here yet. It is four o'clock—he will not come before six. No one called after you left. I watched from the window—the town is quiet. I kept a light burning in your room until two o'clock. Then I turned it off and

opened the window, as though you had just gone to bed. There is whisky in the dining-room—I will get it—then we will go to your room and 'tend to the hand. I will burn the rags and wash the basins. No one will know."

But when she made as though she would move away he clutched at her and drew her back. She came and stood beside him, and he buried his head in the folds of her skirt. His hat fell off, and she saw that his hair was wet, and that perspiration stood on his forehead.

"I killed him." He shuddered. "I killed him."

She did not draw back. There was no slightest pause or start in the stroke of her hand on his head. But her heart gave a bound in her breast, and then stood still. There are two sins in the world, the one of the man, the other for the woman. Through the shedding of blood the feud of good and evil between them was ended.

"I killed him," he went on, muttering to himself and to her. She waited a long time without question or comment. Finally his story began to come from his lips. "I killed him — because I was afraid. I was afraid — when you asked me — and when you came to the claim — that was why —"

Again there was a pause. Her body ached from her rigid posture, but she did not move.

"We are all afraid — of something," she said at length.

He seemed to have been waiting for her voice. "I have always been afraid," he said. "When I was a boy I was afraid —and wouldn't fight. The boys found out and goaded me. Once they got me into a corner with the town bully. They stood around — with clubs and stones—and I couldn't get away. I called for my mother—but she couldn't hear — and they took up my call and my mother's name went howling around the ring.



"And now you know where I stand, get back where I wont have to look at you in the light of day."

"After a while the bully hit me—and I was so afraid I struck out—I struck again — and again — and again. And every time I landed—and the crowd was silent—but I kept on—striking out. The bully went down—but still I was afraid of him. I wanted him dead—dead—where he could not torment me any more. I grabbed a club from a boy and beat him—until they pulled me off. And I went home crying to my mother.

"I was afraid—like that—yesterday—and to-night."

She went on stroking his hair. But the very nerves of her body seemed to

reach out and supplement the caress of her hands.

"Would you rather wait—to tell me the rest?" she asked. His fingers clutched tighter in her skirt.

"No—no—" he whimpered. "When I was a boy I went to my mother—that other time. And she took me in her arms—and listened. And I was a great boy—half grown—but she let me lay in her arms—and after a while—after I'd told it all—everything—I went to sleep—so—in her arms—and forgot.

"I want to tell you—and afterward you can throw me out—you ought to. But wait awhile—let me forget first—like I did that other time. I've always loved you—but it was the shame—and other people—I've always been a coward. I want to strike out—and kill—when I'm afraid.

"Ever since I first heard of this I've been afraid. Last night when I left, I was cold with fear. But there was no other way. It was like the other time: I was in a corner. When we got to the railroad station and I saw the black figures of the other men coming out of the night, from this way and that way, I wanted to run—like a woman. Nobody spoke—and the train rumbled like a death car.

"We got rifles at Discovery. Then Deland took the lead. When we got into the willows between Anvil and Glacier, I tried to desert—to crawl away. But Whitely seemed to know—and kept behind me. We didn't know whether they had pickets out, so we dropped flat and wormed up to the rim of Glacier.

"From there we saw the jumpers working by lantern-light in the pit. We were to drop down on them—surprise them.

"Then Deland began to jabber about his family, and about the Company—and what a lot of money would be tied up if he went to the pen'. I turned to see if Whitely was still there—behind me. His eyes burned out at me through the holes in the bandanna over his face.

"I don't know how I got to my feet and down the hill. I remember an order—and of running—the shouts of the surprised men. I began to fling out with the butt of my rifle, and strike and curse. None of the Hot Air boys was with us—Whitely had decided they'd better not be. But they were waiting on the hill, and came down quietly and surrounded the bunk-house where the jumper's day crew were sleeping. God, it was awful!

"Something went down before me—I backed away—I wanted to run. It reached out at me from the ground where it lay—reached out with the pick it had been working with a minute before. The pick caught my arm at the elbow and ripped the flesh to my hand. I was afraid of it. I wanted it dead. I raised my gun and shot. I would have shot again—and again—but some one pulled me away.

"Then I saw it was all over—that the Hot Air boys had come down



and taken the sluice boxes—and that we were herding the jumpers towards Discovery—and two of them were carrying—the thing I'd shot—"

He stopped, and her thin hand seemed to grow luminous in the pallid light of the new day, as it moved up and down, up and down in the soothing rhythm.

"There'll be a grand jury—and indictments—and trials—and—"

She put her hand over his mouth.

"We'll beat the indictment," she said. "The *Queen* sails to-night."

"They'll watch every lighter—"

"We'll take a dory—and go aboard just as she starts."

"Dory? Look at that hand. Could I row a dory?"

"I'll row the dory."

"In this sea?" He strained his eyes toward her as a child in the dark strains toward an opening door.

"In this sea," she answered.

THAT night a man in slicker and sou'-wester, and a stripling of a boy in hip boots and short rubber jacket left the house. A nasty wind had blown all day, and the heavens were piled with thick black clouds that reflected their inky masses in the sea. The man and the boy, unburdened by the usual paraphernalia of prospectors and mushers, struck off down a straggling street that paralleled the beach line. At the southern edge of the city they turned at a right angle to the sea, picking their way among tin cans, discarded machinery and junk.

As they approached the beach the boy went ahead. A dory drawn up on the sand slipped down to the tide as his shoulder pressed against the prow. The boy's companion came out of the shadows, stepped into the boat, crossed the seats to the after-part and sat down, holding a bandaged arm before him. The boy stood in the prow and shoved with a long oar. A far-flung swell of the sea curled up on the beach, and the boat went out on its ebb—out and out with the long, sickening gasps of an awakening storm under it.

The boy sprang to his seat and set the loose oar in its socket. The dory quivered and turned, writhing back towards the shore. The boy flattened himself in a long stroke, and the dory righted herself and crept reluctantly forward.

Bit by bit, stroke by stroke, the shore, a denser line in the dense shadow of the night, receded. The wind came across the poor, and the spray stung the face of the rower. Ahead gleamed the lights of the *Queen*, and her long breaths of preparation for travel came portentously over the water. The little dory crept nearer. The youth at the oars strained to his full length at every stroke, and the man in the stern lunged forward to add impetus to the oars.

At last the *Queen* loomed high and black above them, a Stygian wall shutting off heaven and the sea with an impenetrable, unscalable shadow. So close huddled the little boat that a hand extended might have touched the hulk. But the small black craft was one with the huge oblivion below to the watch on the bridge.

One oar scraped raucously against the side of the ship as the rower headed around and struck out for a pale ribbon of light that gleamed on the water from the pilot-house. Like an elephant stampeding at a mouse, the ship shivered from prow to stern, heaved and strained, churning the waters into deep spirals.

The little boat swung out, heedless of desperate oars, spun half around with the heavy stern for a pivot, and then with a sickening suddenness lurched broadside toward the moving ship.

The man in the stern covered his face with his bandaged hand. An oar struck the black hulk and splintered, and in the abyss under the liner the small boat trembled and lurched and spun in a dance of death. Freed of the feeble restraint of the oar, the fluid noose of destruction hissed at it, tightened about its prey. Then a hungry tongue of water shot up, and the oily black rim of a whirlpool swam in and crept up about the feet of the man and the boy. The man remembered a prayer of his childhood.

Then the youth at the oar-locks stood up and clutched at the collar of his jacket. The fastener gave way, and a scream, long and shrill, poignant with the claim of life to live, rose above the snarl of the curling waves, above the



In the abyss under the liner the small boat trembled and lurched and spun in a dance of death.

hiss of steam and the creaking of tightening cables. It was the primordial scream of the female—the scream of the first abduction, the first birth-pang, the first murder.

THE deck hands got them aboard, their water-logged boots dragging hungrily back to the death below. The youth's sou'wester had been wrenched away, and two gilded braids — braids whose cheap gold bronzed off to brown at the roots—gleamed strangely on the wet rubber of his garments.

"All right," shouted the watch on the bridge, and the engineer below received his signal. The *Queen* rode out, and faced about for the States. The capsized dory in the wake bobbed and danced, and a shattered oar went careening after.

The lights of Nome gleamed fainter and small, until they were like star-points set in the velvet of the night. Then high and sweet, clear of the clouds, the moon swam into the sky. Shanty and beach line, gaunt machinery and sodden tundra, blanched luminant. An infinitesimal scar on the rounded border of the sky was Anvil Rock.

A man and a youth with a golden head stood at a port-hole, the water from their wet garments curling in black pools on the carpet of their stateroom, as they watched the eerie vision wax white and fade.

"There is no cable to Seattle?" the man said at length.

"No, there is no cable," responded the other.

"If there was any news, we'd beat it down."

"We'd beat it down."

The dancing dory in the wake, a troubled note on a widening highway of phosphorescence, dropped over the margin of the horizon.

"Some other poor devil may get it fastened on him—the courts will want somebody for the shooting," the man said.

"It was self defense."

"It was rioting."

"No Nome jury would convict a man —in this case."

"Still, you never can tell."

"No, you never can tell."

"What would a man do—taken up, and tried, and maybe convicted—for a thing like that—that he hadn't done?"

"He'd have to face it, I guess—unless the man who did it came to the front."

"It would take courage—to come to the front."

"Yes—it would take courage."

There was a long pause. When the man spoke again there was a strange, strained note in his voice, like that in the voice of a child who swallows back his terrors.

"Something I have wondered about all my life is beginning to clear up. I think I am beginning to see this courage thing. I think courage is—is—backing as far as you can, maybe—and then—not going blind with terror—and striking out—and cursing—and killing. But just getting behind yourself—and standing."

His companion laid a frail, bruised hand upon his, and he went on:

"I've wondered about it all my life, and I've watched men — but I never learned from them. Men cover their courage either with bluster or dissimulation. But you — you are just plain — brave. And what you do, it seems to me, is to face about and stand—"

"No, dear, no—" the other broke in. "I ran away—backed and backed—and when I couldn't back any further—struck out—at myself. Circle City and all that—was—was just striking out, in blind, driven terror—trying to kill—the thing that was me. If I stand now, it's because loving you has given me solid ground for my feet—"

"Now I know what courage is."

Both were white to the lips, and stood with hands locked tight on the ledge of the port-hole, staring into the circled segment of the night like diviners staring, breathless, into a murky crystal.

After a long time the man spoke:

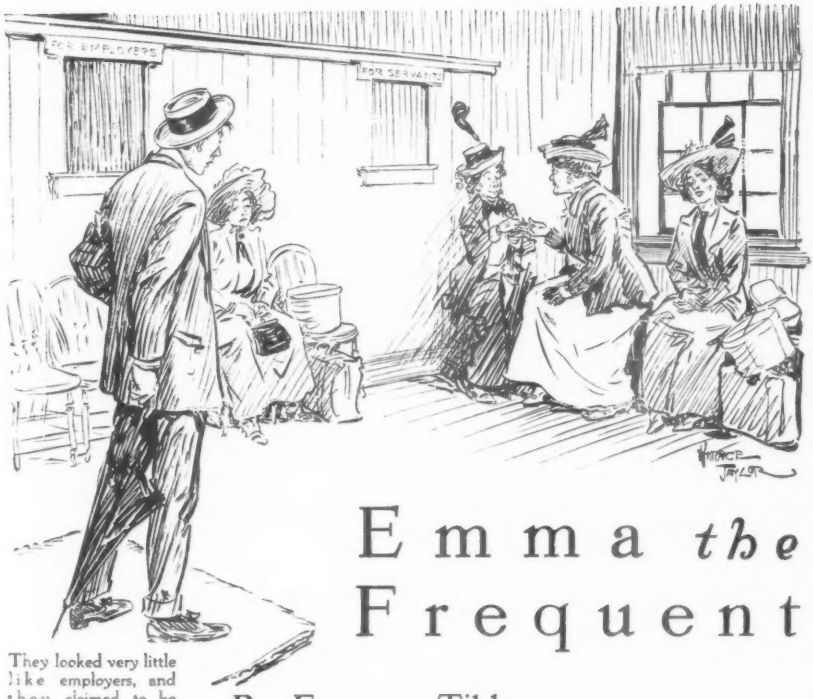
"I am going back to take my chance."

"We are going back — to take our chance."

"We?"

"We."

The man looked down into the white face under the gilded hair, and in his stricken eyes a light dawned.



They looked very little like employers, and they claimed to be "help."

Emma *the* Frequent

By Freeman Tilden

A new story by the author of "The Called Bluff," in which we find J. Hollister Benedick, the freshest hotel clerk on the B. C. & L., "hirin' and firin'" the help at the Mansion House.

ILLUSTRATED BY HORACE TAYLOR

"BENEDICK," said Weatherbee, the proprietor of the Mansion House, speaking to his night-clerk, "how long have you been here in Maysville?"

"Two years last month," replied the night-clerk promptly.

Weatherbee stroked his chin whiskers contemplatively. "Well," he drawled, "you started in pretty fresh, as I remember. I dunno as you've lost all your freshness yet."

The night-clerk, instead of looking abashed, seemed rather pleased. The fact was, he prided himself on his freshness, although in the last two years he had made some discoveries about the degrees of freshness that can be worked on the patrons of a country hotel.

"Anyway," went on Weatherbee, "that's neither here nor there. What I was getting at is this: I've kind of made up my mind that I can rely on you more than I have in the past. You've caught on to things first rate, and I guess I'm safe in letting the reins out a little. And if five dollars a month more than you're getting would be any use to you, I'll fix that all right."

It wasn't as much money as J. Hollister Benedick felt that he should have, but the implied flattery in Weatherbee's words gave the young clerk more pleasure than a "raise." He stammered out a



Without warning, she suddenly let fly the mixing-spoon at the night-clerk's head.

reply, and waited for more particulars.

"Now, in the first place," continued Weatherbee, "do you think you can hire help?"

"Sure I can," replied J. Hollister, without considering the matter.

"*Sure I can*," mimicked the proprietor in J. Hollister's tone of assurance. "Well, mebbe you can. If you can, you can do more than I can do, without getting gray hairs. The one big drawback to the hotel business, lemme tell you, is help. They're no good, nowadays. I've seen the time—" He broke off with the remark, "Well, the old times are gone; there's no use trying to live two times at once."

"I *think* I can," J. Hollister amended himself.

"You *think* you can. That's nearer to it. You're going to have a chance to find out, right away. We want a pastry cook, and we want one quick. I want you to put the whole deal through, and not bother me about it. Can you do it?"

"Yes, sir," replied J. Hollister.

"All right, do it."

"But what about Emma?" asked the night-clerk. "Is Emma going to leave?"

"Yes, Emma's going to leave—that is, when you tell her," replied Weatherbee, dryly. And then, suddenly, J. Hollister saw the point. These honeyed words had not been for nothing. Weatherbee's idea was not so much to shift the burden of hiring a pastry cook, as of firing *the* pastry cook.

J. Hollister looked perplexed, and Weatherbee burst out laughing. "'*Sure I can*,'" he drawled, sardonically.

"But what's the matter with Emma?" asked the night-clerk.

"She and the meat cook have been having trouble; and I've concluded it's Emma's fault. She's a holy terror, anyway. A woman with a voice like hers is no regular human being. She's got to go." Weatherbee gave a diabolical chuckle, and added, "And you tell her I said so."

The fact was, Weatherbee wouldn't himself have said those words to Emma for a king's ransom. He was afraid of her. Emma was an enormous woman, red of hair, with plenty of freckles, steel-gray sharpshooter eyes, and a Gatling gun of words, without any Maxim silencer. But the most awful thing about her, next to the menace of her brawny arms, was her voice. Pitched high, rasping as a file on chilled steel, it was, as Weatherbee said, like that of "no regular human being." And her temper was poised upon a needle-point.

She was an excellent cook. Her pies and cake were the talk of the traveling brotherhood that wielded table-tools at the Mansion House — particularly her mince pie. Her mince pie was no less than an inspiration. This was the woman J. Hollister had been delegated to "fire."

FRESH as the hotel clerk was, as confident of his prowess as a manager, he took deep thought in this project. Emma had never liked him very well. He tried to be jocular with her one day, and she construed his wit unfortunately. Since then, his visits to the kitchen, when Emma was about, had consisted of a poking-in of head at the door and giving a quick order.

Something had to be done, however. The matter was definitely in J. Hollister's hands. Weatherbee was no doubt looking forward to an ignominious defeat of his clerk. "He'll get fooled," said the clerk to himself. "I'll strike while the iron is hot."

J. Hollister struck while the iron was hot. That is, the kitchen range was hot. And Emma was hot—hot and irascible. Her face glowed so that each freckle stuck out pugnaciously. Her arms were bare to above the elbow; in her hand she held a big mixing-spoon. J. Hollister entered the kitchen furtively, and looked around to make sure of the location of all exits.

"Mrs.—Emma," he began, for he had forgotten her last name, in the excitement of the moment, "I'm very sorry to have to tell you that your time will be up here Saturday. We'll pay you in full and give you a week's advance."

This "week's advance" was a happy thought that came on the moment's spur. He knew Weatherbee would consider it cheap, if it proved effective.

Emma wheeled around and shot the young man full of forty-five-caliber holes with her steely eyes. "What's that?" she rasped.

J. Hollister repeated, beginning to retire toward the door through which he entered.

Suddenly the storm broke. "Why, you little whipper-snapper!" began Mrs. Emma. "The idea of your coming down here to tell me—" The Gatling gun was spitting words as fast as this extraordinary woman could propel them with breath. Without warning, she suddenly let fly the mixing-spoon at the night-clerk's head.

J. Hollister saw the spoon sailing toward him, and dodged. He dodged in time to avoid being impaled with the handle-end, which bored a neat hole in the soft pine door behind him, and stayed there, a mute witness against the calumny that women cannot throw straight.

That was enough for J. Hollister. He went through the door like a shot. He heard a scream of laughter behind him,



J. Hollister saw the spoon sailing toward him and dodged.

and he knew it was the meat cook, who, though no friend of Emma's, nevertheless was enough of a hotel cook to delight in the humiliation of a clerk. A stream of invective surged upon the door through which J. Hollister had gone.

WHEN the clerk gained the sanctuary of the main desk, he dropped into a chair and mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Gee!" he said. That was all—just "Gee!" The word was a whole epic. J. Hollister had tasted the bitter-sweet fruit of an employer of labor.

J. Hollister had made his attack, and had been repulsed, and had retired in bad order. He now did something even less excusable—a thing he would never have done if he had not been considerably wrought up. He went to Weatherbee.

The proprietor of the Mansion House restrained his guffaws until the clerk had gone. He simulated a disconcerting attitude of misplaced confidence. "It looks as if the only way I can get anything done right is to do it myself," he said reproachfully.

"But what in thunder could I do?" asked J. Hollister. "I told her she was through, and she almost brained me. You can't strike a woman, you know."

The mental picture of J. Hollister striking Emma, the Amazonic Emma, nearly broke down the forced sobriety of the proprietor. He shook his head sadly, and said: "I'll give you one more chance, Hollister. I must say I'm a little disappointed in you. I thought you were more of a diplomat." He looked at the ceiling thoughtfully. Then he concluded: "Or perhaps I'd better take hold of the matter myself."

"No, sir," protested J. Hollister. He couldn't give up the ship so easily. He abused himself now for having to run to Weatherbee so helplessly. Diplomat! That word gave him a new idea. Why hadn't he spent a little time drawing up a tactful plan of campaign. He might have known that abrupt methods never would succeed with Emma. He went back to the desk resolved to find the answer to the puzzle, or quit the job.

Sleep brings counsel, J. Hollister had heard. He decided to "sleep on it." It was Thursday. There was one more day left in which to act. He turned in without having invented any scheme, and with the wild hope that he might dream one.

Next morning he was wakened, upon his order, at eight-thirty. He had had a vague notion of a possible procedure. More than that he had a high resolve that Saturday night would find the hotel free of the refractory pastry cook. He dressed himself more carefully than usual, and went out for a walk about town. Before he returned he had perfected what he felt to be a scheme nothing less than Bismarckian. He entered the hotel with confident step.

"Hello, Hollister," was the day-clerk's greeting. "She's gone!"

"Who's gone?" replied the night-clerk, uncomprehending.

"Emma."

"Gone? Where?"

"Bag and baggage — on the 10:28 south-bound. Said she wished you were here, so you could have a piece of her mind."

J. Hollister, the fresh, whistled his amazement. He was half glad, half sorry. He was afraid of Emma; yet he had lost the opportunity of trying out his scheme upon her. At the door of the writing-room he met Weatherbee, who was wreathed in smiles. The proprietor stuck out his hand.



She and the meat-cook had been having trouble.

"Shake!" he said to the clerk. "I guess you scared her off, after all. Now it's up to you to get another pastry cook."

J. HOLLISTER seized the Springhaven *Globe* and scanned the classified advertisements. Springhaven was the

nearest city, a place of about fifty thousand inhabitants, and the *Globe* carried many "want" advertisements. But among the "Situations Wanted" there was no sign of a cook. It was either an off-day or all the cooks were perfectly satisfied with their positions.

There was something, however, that caught the eye of the night clerk. It was the heading "Employment Bureaus." Under this general title were the notices of several firms that advertised a willingness to furnish any kind of jobs with help and any kind of help with jobs. "Hotel Help a Specialty," said one of these announcements.

Now old man Weatherbee had had his experience with employment bureaus. He once said (but not to J. Hollister) that the way to get a good cook was to buy all the morning papers, cut out all the advertisements of employment bureaus, then light your cigar with them and do your own cooking. To the night clerk he had no advice to offer. The sagacious old hotel-keeper, with his Yankee chin-beard, intended to kill two birds with one stone: to find out what his night clerk was good for, and to have whatever fun there was in the game.

J. Hollister took the advertisements very seriously. He called up the "Star Employment Bureau" on the telephone, and after a tedious delay, during which the night clerk gnawed one end of his pencil, the long-distance operator got them on the wire.

The night clerk had anticipated some difficulty in obtaining just the kind of a cook he wanted. He had a vague idea of something about five feet, five inches tall, with pink cheeks, fluffy hair and an angelic disposition. He did not know that females with these qualifications seldom go in for public cooking; that these culinary gems are, on the contrary, tied up with a long-term contract which states that they shall love, honor and obey.

So he was amazed when the manager of the "Star Employment Bureau" replied briskly "We've got the very person for you. Has had all kinds of experience in country hotels; just came in this morning. She left her job of her own accord, on account of—well, to be frank with you, because her boss was paying a little too much attention to her. You know how women are about these things—especially modest women. She's very fond of the country; and she's certainly great on pastry. Four dollars a week and found. I don't think you could find her equal anywhere at five dollars or more. Shall I send her along?"

"Send her along!" cried J. Hollister, joyously. "Have her catch the—let me see—the two-twenty-three from Springhaven. That'll get her here in time for supper. Tell her to take the 'bus right up to the Mansion House!"

IT was done! J. Hollister breathed a sigh of relief and gratification as he hung up the receiver. "No use talking," he said, "these employment bureaus are great institutions!"

It suddenly occurred to him that he might have asked for a description of the young lady; but on second thought he was glad he had not. He wanted to be surprised. He fell to wondering what kind of treatment she had suffered at the hands of the unscrupulous proprietor who had been "paying too much attention to her."

Weatherbee sauntered into the office a little later, and found his night clerk in a state of being eminently pleased with himself. "I've found a cook," said J. Hollister. "A corkerina!"

"So?" said the hotel-keeper, in genuine surprise. "Where'd you get her?"

"Star Employment Bureau in Springhaven. Did the whole job in less than ten minutes over the 'phone."

Weatherbee's chin-whiskers waggled curiously, and he grunted, "Umph!" A gleam of humor played in his eyes.

J. Hollister caught the expression, and sensed the skepticism that it conveyed.

"Well, you bet your silverware they don't put anything over on me," he boasted. "If they've sent us a lemon, I'll make them pay for it."

"That's the way to talk," replied Weatherbee. "You know how to do it, I guess. I wish I had known about your skill in these things, years ago."

"Sarcasm, eh?" thought the night clerk. "Just you wait."

Weatherbee did wait. So did J. Hol-

lister. The Perfect Pastry Cook did not arrive on the specified train. The train and hour being late, it was no use to call the employment bureau, and J. Hollister roosted around gloomily, his confidence slowly oozing away. There was one more train from the south, however, due in Maysville at seven-forty-five. Meanwhile the traveling men were eating the last batch of pies created by the obstreperous Emma.

At eight o'clock the dining-room doors were closed, and the office was full of transients. It was unusually busy for Friday night. J. Hollister was behind the desk, in no buoyant state of mind. Then the 'bus rolled up to the door, and the clerk craned his neck to see what it had brought. By the dim light of the electric lamp outside, he could make out the figure of a woman in the 'bus. His countenance changed instantly. The gloom gave way to happiness. He saw the woman get out, saw the porter take her suit-case from the driver's seat and place it on the steps. In another moment the door opened, and the Perfect Pastry Cook sailed into the lobby. J. Hollister gave one look and came about as near fainting as he had ever done in his life.

It was Emma! Emma the Terrible. Emma of the brawny arms, the chilled-steel voice and the fiery hair.

SHE strode over to the desk and cast upon the poor clerk a triumphant smile. "Well, I'm back again, I see," she said.

"You—you—" That was as far as J. Hollister could get.

"Yes, me—me," replied Emma. "I thought you'd be wanting me back. Is my bed made up? And I'm hungry, too. Tell 'em to get me something good to eat."

"Did the Star Employment Bureau send *you?*" asked the night clerk, in an icy tone.

"Sure they did. I'd no more than got in there before you telephoned. Say, Mr. Fresh, did they tell you my old boss was stuck on me, and I had to leave? Did they? I told 'em to put that in—to make it more romantic, you might say."

"Well, I suppose you may as well stay over night, anyway," said J. Hollister weakly. "Go along



"Well, I'm back again, I see."

into the kitchen and tell them what you want." Then he took a cigar out of the case and ineffectually tried to light the wrong end.

Up in his room on the third floor old man Weatherbee roared with merriment when he heard that Emma was back. He laughed until he reached the gurgling stage; his big frame shook, and the tears appeared in his eyes. But when he came down to the office, he was grimly sober. The night clerk looked sheepish.

"Decided we'd keep Emma, did you?" asked Weatherbee.

"Don't jump on a man when he's down," replied J. Hollister peevishly. "I bet you she wont stay here long."

"How long, for instance?" asked Weatherbee, mockingly.

"No longer than until I can get another pastry cook."

"By telephone?"

"That's it; rub it in," snarled J. Hollister. His usual care-free disposition was becoming more and more damaged. Weatherbee saw that he had gone far enough; so he affected a different manner and slapped the young fellow on the shoulder. "I guess you can take care of yourself, Hollister. Go to it like a man. I wont interfere."

EMMA stayed at the Mansion House until Monday afternoon. She made up a batch of her incomparable pies, and considerable excellent cake, and stacks of doughnuts. She made no trouble, even won the transient affection of the meat-cook. At least, there was a truce between them.

J. Hollister did not intend to be gulled by this display of meekness. He assumed that after a week of this lamb-like conduct, Emma would erupt. On Monday afternoon he stuck his head in the kitchen door and spoke his mind. "There's no use in your trying to stay on here," he said. "I'm going to Springhaven tomorrow after a new pastry cook. You'll get a week's pay, and no more. And if you start anything when the new cook comes, you'll land in the lock-up."

As he spoke, he prepared to dodge anything from the mixing-spoon to a stove lid. But Emma was cherubic. The warlike spirit seemed to be crushed out of her. J. Hollister, at a distance of ten feet, even fancied that he saw a tear glistening in her eye; but he felt that if such a tear did really exist, it must be spurious.

"Just as you say, Mr. Benedick," replied Emma, in tones of sadness. "I like this place, and I'd like to stay, but if you don't want me I'll go. You'll never get anybody to work more faithful."

In the face of this disposition the night clerk felt that he had been unnecessarily harsh. "We've no complaint to make against your work," he replied. "But we think we can do better; that's all." He wondered what on earth had come over the woman. But he was relieved to find her in such a mood.

Emma was packed off again on the last train. She had not brought her trunk this time, and her dispossession was effected easily. If J. Hollister had been an older hand, he might have been more suspicious of this unexpected docility.

Next morning J. Hollister took the first train for Springhaven. He was done with dependence on the telephone. At first he decided to go to another employment bureau, shunning this "Star" place; but on second thought he decided that inasmuch as he had a grievance against the "Star" people, he would be more likely to get satisfaction there than at an office where he would be regarded as a brand-new victim. So he headed for the "Star Employment Bureau."

On a side street, among a lot of seedy-looking tenement houses, he found the object of his search. There was a sign above the second-story windows, which informed him that "all kinds of domestic help would be cheerfully furnished" with no cost whatever to the employer. At the top of the stairs he met a glazed door, on which were the words, "Intelligence Office" and beneath this an invitation to "Walk In." He walked in.

THE big room was divided into two parts, separated by a partition. Two windows in this partition were labeled, respectively, "For employers" and "For Servants." Outside the partition was a long bench and some chairs, and at the moment J. Hollister entered, the chairs and the bench were occupied by some

seven or eight females who looked very little like employers, and not too much like genuine "help." But the clerk soon found that, at least, they claimed to be "help."

The brisk young person at the window, after glancing at J. Hollister's card, looked up and asked, "Then *she* didn't suit?" He asked this question as though it were the one great astonishment of his life.

"Suit?" replied J. Hollister, bitterly. "Why, that woman was the same one we fired the day before."

"Well, now," was the reply, "is that so?" The plain inference was, from the disinterested and impersonal nature of the reply, that employers were in the habit of hiring their employees back again the day after they fired them.

"Now what I want is an A-Number-One pastry cook, clean, neat and that doesn't have tantrums," said J. Hollister. Then he added, grimly, "And I want to see her before I hire her, too. No more of this pig-in-a-poke business."

"I suppose you know," said the person at the window, "that good pastry cooks aren't to be had for the asking. Now, besides that one I sent you, I've got just one other on my list. She's sitting right out there on the bench. Mrs. Klopster! Will you please step here? Mrs. Klopster, meet Mr. Benedick. He is looking for a first-class pastry cook. Perhaps you'd better tell him something about yourself, and your experience."

J. Hollister looked at Mrs. Klopster, and was not favorably impressed. She did not look either capable, or willing, or good-natured, or prepossessing in any of the particulars that the night clerk's imagination had pictured. He found out, in three minutes, everything he needed to know concerning what Mrs. Klopster thought of herself. She was, according to Mrs. Klopster, the best pastry cook in her acquaintance, which was large, and (she said) select. She had never lost a position through any fault of her own, and had often been praised by people who knew what they were talking about. She was the incarnation of all the moral attainments, as evidenced by the fact that she began every sentence with the phrase, "Why, bless your heart!" She was worth ten dollars a week—had, in fact, once received this fabulous amount—but if she got the kind of place she was looking for, she would accept four dollars. She judged, she said, that the Mansion House was the very place which her dreams had woven into shape.

"I think I'll look around a bit, at some of the other places," said J. Hollister, "and then come back."

"I doubt if you'll do better anywhere," cautioned the window-person, "but you're welcome to try."

The doubt was realized. J. Hollister went from office to office, until he had covered all the known and advertised ground. The only competitor of Mrs. Klopster was a dragged-out, unwashed little Greek woman who spoke cracked English and was certainly tuberculous. It was getting on his nerves, this cook-hunting expedition. J. Hollister was used, as he said, "to have things come his way." The uncertainty, the disappointments, and the trudging from one soiled, up-stairs office to another, made Mrs. Klopster look better at every step. Finally he went back to the "Star."

As he entered, the first face he saw was that of Emma—Emma the redoubtable. She was seated on the bench, looking as chipper and expectant as any hen before feeding-time. She sat beside Mrs. Klopster, and it was evident that they had struck up an acquaintance. With a sinking of the heart J. Hollister observed that Emma was the most promising-looking prospect in the whole motley array. But she was, of course, out of the question. He had not come all the way from Maysville to re-engage Emma. So he was forced to take Mrs. Klopster.

"Well, good luck till I see you again!" cried Emma, as Mrs. Klopster went out with her new employer.

"Thanks," replied Mrs. Klopster. Then the new cook turned to J. Hollister and vouchsafed the judgment: "She's a nice woman."

"Yeh," replied the night clerk.

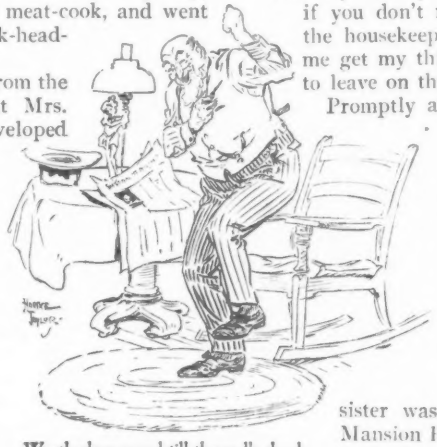
II

MRS. KLOPSTER took charge of the Mansion House kitchen like a woman who had been hired to effect a general reorganization of the whole de-

partment of culinary operations. Nothing that had been done was right, in her opinion. If a double-boiler was hanging on this nail, it was wrong; it should hang on that nail. She began her service by making out a long list of things that the kitchen needed. Nobody had ever dreamed that the house was so ill-supplied. She ordered (and got, too) pots and pans and kettles and unheard-of supplies, some of which could not be obtained in Maysville. If purchasing activity was all that had been required of a pastry cook, Mrs. Klopster was a huge success.

Having exhausted her imagination in this line of endeavor, she baked up a small and inferior batch of pastry, quarreled with the meat-cook, and went to bed with a sick-headache.

The next news from the sick-room was that Mrs. Klopster had developed a sore throat; and that, in turn, was succeeded by the gruesome report that she had "shooting pains" in her back. She refused, however, to entertain the idea of a doctor. She wasn't going to cause her new employers any such expense, she announced.



Weatherbee roared till the walls shook.

Thursday there was no improvement on the part of the invalid, and the hotel was being fed on baker's products. Late in the afternoon there was a call from the sick-room to the effect that the sufferer wished to speak with Mr. Benedick "quite important."

The night clerk found Mrs. Klopster in bed, muffled up to the chin, and doing a lot of groaning which she assured her visitor was absolutely unavoidable. The long and short of the interview was that Mrs. Klopster would have to go back to the city. She ought to have the best of care, and was not getting it.

The night clerk's face showed his alarm and discomfiture. He was heartless enough to forget all about Mrs. Klopster's pain, and to cry out, selfishly, "What are we going to do?"

Mrs. Klopster cast upon the young man the eyes of an abused soul. "You don't know how sick I am," sch said. "You don't think of me; but I've thought of the hotel. I've sent for my sister. She's a better cook than I am, and you'll be glad to have here here."

"You say you've sent for her? When did you send? When is she coming?"

"She ought to be here this evening. I telegrafted this morning."

"Well, I'm much obliged to you, anyway," said the night clerk, gratefully. "I hope you'll get better soon."

"Thank you," replied the cook. "Now if you don't mind, will you ask the housekeeper if she can help me get my things together, so as to leave on the afternoon train?"

Promptly at five o'clock Mrs. Klopster, looking not so very feeble, was at the station to board the south-bound train; promptly at half-past five the up-train arrived; and promptly ten minutes later, Mrs. Klopster's sister was bundled into the Mansion House under the expectant eyes of J. Hollister Benedick. He looked at the sister, gave one shrill whoop and sank back into the chair. It was Emma. Emma had returned.

"Well, I see I'm back again," she announced, cheerily. "I guess you couldn't get a more reliable cook, could you?"

J. HOLLISTER made a noise in his throat, but he could not raise the desired words. He motioned to the porter to take the woman's suit-case upstairs; he pointed with his thumb toward the kitchen; and when Emma was gone into her old precincts, he fled to Weatherbee.

"I'm a nut!" he cried, breaking in on the proprietor. "I've got to have a



Weatherbee went down to the kitchen himself and interviewed Emma.

guardian appointed. That she-devil is back. You can look for another night clerk just as soon as you want to."

"Why, who's back? What's all this rumpus?" asked Weatherbee, with a great appearance of innocence.

"Emma," groaned J. Hollister. "The other one went away—sick, she said—and told me she'd sent for her sister. And then back comes this—this—" He paused, not knowing what appellation to award the husky Emma.

This time Weatherbee could not repress his laughter. He roared till the walls shook. "She sure put one over on you, m'boy," he cried. "I don't see how we can do anything but keep her, if she wont stay fired. She's the most persistent thing I ever saw. She simply will not be fired. What do you figure on doing now?"

"I'm through," said the night clerk. "I bit off more than I could chew. I thought I was a wise Ike. I belong in the booby-hatch."

Weatherbee had no wish to part with his night clerk. He enjoyed the joke too much to want to let it go as far as that. He went down to the kitchen himself and interviewed Emma. He found her in high spirits.

"What's this about your sister?" he asked, suspiciously. "Was that woman your sister?"

In a burst of frankness Emma told him the story. "You see, Mr. Weatherbee," she said, "I couldn't bear the idea of going somewhere else. I like this town, and I like the hotel. Sometimes my temper does get away from me, and I'm sorry for it. But I wanted to come back; and when I saw this Mrs. Klopster was going to get the job, I made a deal with her. She aint my sister, no more than anybody. She aint related to me at all. It cost me five dollars to fix it up with her."

"Uh-huh," nodded Weatherbee. "And I suppose while you were arranging things, you fixed it with her to come out here and order about thirty dollars' worth of truck to put into the kitchen, for you to have the use of when you got back."

Emma smiled beatifically. "Well, I thought you needed a few things," she

admitted. "I had been thinking so for quite a long time."

Weatherbee was an oldish man. He had been in the hotel business for years. But he took off his slouch hat and bowed gallantly to this Amazonian diplomat. "I take off my hat to you," he said. "You beat the Dutch."

"I beat that fresh clerk of yours," she said, with satisfaction. "Although," she added, magnanimously, "he aint such a bad feller."

To J. Hollister, Weatherbee made only the remark: "If you can get rid of her, Hollister, all right. I can't. She seems to be permanent."

"She's frequent, and that's no lie," said J. Hollister, with a grin. He had begun to recover his self-possession.

FOUR whole days J. Hollister applied himself to the problem, and then gave it up. He acknowledged his defeat. And then, owing to a chance remark made by a traveling man, he suddenly saw the situation in a new light.

Delormie, a typewriter salesman, coming out from the dining-room one dinner-time, had said: "By George, Benedick, that woman, or whoever makes your pastry, is a wonder. Never tasted anything like the pie I get here at this house. If anybody from the big hotels should stop here, you wouldn't have her long. They'd give her bigger money than you could put up. They'd take her so blamed quick they'd make your head swim."

"Huh!" snorted the clerk, "you couldn't tear her away from us. Nobody could offer her enough to go. We've got a mortgage on her."

The idea began to work in J. Hollister's mind. Slowly it occurred to him that the Mansion House was trying to get rid of one of its assets. He remembered that the pastry of Emma had always been the subject of more or less comment; and he likewise remembered the gold-brick quality of Mrs. Klopster's work. Added to this, was the fact that Emma had acted "like a perfect lady" since her last arrival.

All these considerations were stated to Weatherbee by the night clerk.

"You've lost your courage," replied Weatherbee, prodding him.

"No, it isn't that. I'll admit, she's got me going. But I honestly think we could do a whole lot worse, especially since she's tamed down."

"All right, just as you say," said the proprietor. "Tell her she's got a life job, if you want to."

The clerk went to the kitchen once more. This time he carried the olive branch of peace and tranquility. He expatiated on the necessity of "getting along" like "one big family." He went so far as to say that perhaps the initial quarrel might not have been all Emma's fault. Then he ended by praising Emma's cooking, in glowing terms. "So," he concluded, "I don't see any reason why you might not as well stay with us."

Emma was pleased. She said so, and she looked so. "But," she said, "I'm afraid I'll have to be going at the end of next week. I'm sorry to leave, just when we are beginning to get so well acquainted. But my mother needs me at home."

THEY say, at the Mansion House, that when J. Hollister ceased to walk about in a sort of hypnotic trance, the first coherent remark he made was: "Who's the guy that said he understood women?"

Another story of J. Hollister Benedick is coming in an early issue.

What Has Gone Before In "GOD'S COUNTRY—AND THE WOMAN"

JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD, student of the far North, has found knighthood still in flower up there in "God's Country." It is near the rim of the Arctic where you first meet his knight—and the knight's lady.

Philip Weyman is an American doing government research. After two years he starts south for home. Six hundred miles north of the nearest town, he comes on a wonderful girl of pure English type.

The girl is terror stricken. But Weyman's manner is straightforward, and she is reassured. She confides that she is hiding from an enemy. He begs her to tell him her trouble.

"Would you do a great deal for me—like a man?" she asks.

He bows his head. Then he learns she wants him to assume the name Philip Paul Darcambal, go back to her home with her and pose as an explorer and her husband. He is to protect her, to fight for her blindly. He is never to ask the reason, and in the end, he is to go into the woods and die—to her and those who know her.

Philip is staggered. But his captivation by the beauty and charm of this wondrous forest girl is so complete that he accepts.

Jean Jacques Croisset, a half-breed, comes. After a few words with her, Jean says to Philip:

"Our Josephine trusts you as she would not one in a million, M'sieur Weyman." Then with glittering eyes: "And for you—death, unless you play your part like a man."

Josephine tells Philip she is the daughter of John Adare, of Adare House, a mansion in the wilderness. It is at Adare House that "Something will happen that will turn your heart to stone and ice." Jean Croisset warns Weyman.

At Adare House, Weyman is assigned to a luxurious room. At a window he sees a face distorted with murderous hate peering at him. Soon afterward, Josephine tells him her father and mother are arriving unexpectedly, and the time to tell him her secret has come. She leads him to her room, where a lovely baby is sleeping. "You remember I told you I spent one year in Montreal," she says with bowed head. "It is my baby." Philip feels her story cannot be true, and his adoration does not wane.

Soon come John Adare and his wife Miriam. Adare is a splendid giant, and his wife is beautiful. Adare's eyes follow her with worship, but between Josephine and her mother Philip notices a coldness. Adare accepts Philip whole-heartedly as Josephine's North-exploring husband whom Josephine married in Montreal and whom he has never seen, but the wife makes him suspect she knows Josephine's secret.

Later a rifle ball whizzes through Philip's window. After a fight with the would-be assassin in the forest, Philip staggers back to his room and learns from Croisset that the bullet was for Adare, whose old room Philip has, and that the man's enmity is a part of the menacing mystery that hangs over Adare House. Croisset goes in pursuit of the man.

Philip learns of a free trader's den of thieves and cut-throats that is only thirty-five miles from Adare House. It is one of a string owned by a man named Lang, in Montreal.

Philip begs Josephine to marry him secretly, the better to protect her. She acknowledges her love for him, but says she not only cannot marry him but that he must make good his promise to leave her at the end of the month. Josephine shows him her pack of wolf strain huskies and how she dares to lay her face against their fierce fanged heads. She puts her hands on Philip in sight of them all and tells him, "Now you are safe with them, for they will never harm anyone whom they have seen me touch in friendship."

The end of the month set by Josephine for Philip's leaving is also unwittingly set by John Adare for a great feast to which everyone for miles around, Indian and white, is to be invited. Philip feels that things have passed beyond the control of man into the hands of fate, and especially when after two days' absence the half-breed, Croisset, reels into his room, from his first pursuit of John Adare's enemy, bleeding and disheveled, and says, "The time is at hand when M'sieur Weyman will know the secret and we must fight a fight that the wilderness will remember so long as there are tongues to tell of it."

Philip bathes Croisset's wounds so that he may go to Josephine, whom he demands to see at once and without the knowledge of her father.



Jean, the man of the forests.

God's Country—and the Woman

By James Oliver Curwood

Author of "Kazan," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM OBERHARDT

CHAPTER XVIII

FOR A FEW moments Philip stood without moving. Jean's return and the strange things he had said had worked like sharp wine in his blood. He was breathing quickly. He was afraid that his appearance just now would betray the mental excitement which he must hide. He drew back deeper into the shadow of the wall and waited, and while he waited he thought of Jean. It was not the old Jean who had returned this night, the Jean with his silence, his strange repression, the mysterious something that had seemed to link him with an age-old past. Out of that spirit had risen a new sort of man—the fighting man. He had seen a new fire in Jean's eyes and face; he had caught new meaning in his words. Jean was no longer the passive Jean—waiting, watching, guarding. Out in the forest something had happened to rouse in him what a word from Josephine would set flaming in the savage breasts of her dogs. And the excitement in Philip's blood was the thrill of exultation, the joy of knowing that action was close at hand—for deep in him had grown the belief that only through action could Josephine be freed for him.

Suddenly, softly, there came floating to him the low, sweet tones of the piano, and then, sweeter still, the voice of Josephine. Another moment, and Miriam's voice had joined her in a song whose melody seemed to float like that of spirit-voices through the thick log walls of Adare House. Soundlessly he moved toward the room where they were waiting for him, a deeper flush mounting into his face now. He opened the door without being heard, and looked in.

Josephine was at the piano. The great lamp above her head flooded her in a mellow light in which the rich masses of her hair shimmered in a glorious golden glow. His heart beat with the knowledge that she had again dressed for him to-night. Her white neck was bare. In her hair he saw for a second time a red rose. For a space

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he saw no one but her. Then his eyes turned for an instant to Miriam. She was standing a little back, and it seemed to him that he had never seen her so beautiful. Against the wall, in a great chair, sat the Master of Adare, his bearded chin in the palm of his hand, looking at the two with a steadiness of gaze that was more than adoration. Philip entered. Still he was unheard. He stood silent until the song was finished, and it was Josephine, turning, who saw him first.

"Philip!" she cried.

Adare started, as if awakening from a dream. Josephine came to Philip, holding out both her hands, her beautiful face smiling with welcome. Even as their warm touch thrilled him he felt a sudden chill creep over him. A swift glance showed him that Adare had gone to Miriam. Instead of words of greeting, he whispered low in Josephine's ear:

"I would have come sooner, but I have been with Jean. He returned a few minutes ago. Strange things have happened, and he says that he must see you within an hour, and that your father must not know. He is in my room. You must get away without rousing suspicion."

Her fingers gripped his tightly. The soft glow in her eyes faded away. A look of fear leapt into them, and her face went white. He drew her nearer, until her hands were upon his breast.

"Don't look like that," he whispered. "Nothing can hurt you—nothing in the world. See—I must do this to bring your color back, or they will guess something is wrong!"

He bent and kissed her on the lips.

Adare's voice burst out happily.

"Good boy, Philip! Don't be bashful when we're around. That's the first time I've seen you kiss your wife!"

There was none of the white betrayal in Josephine's cheeks now. They were the color of the rose in her hair. She had time to look up into Philip's face, and whisper with a laughing break in her voice:

"Thank you, Philip. You have saved me again."

With Philip's hand in hers she turned to her father and mother.

"Philip wants to scold me, *mon père*."



Steadily he kept his eyes on the curtained window. What was happening there now? To what was Josephine listening in these tense minutes of waiting?

she said. "And I cannot blame him. He has seen almost nothing of me to-day."

"And I have been scolding Miriam because they have given me no chance with the baby," rumbled Adare. "I have seen him but twice to-day—the little beggar! And both times he was asleep. But I have forced them to terms, Philip. From to-morrow I am to have him as much as I please. When they want him they will find him in the big room."

Josephine led Philip to her mother, who had seated herself on one of the divans.

"I want you to talk with Philip, *Mikawe*," she said. "I have promised Father that he should have a peep at the baby. I will bring him back very soon."

PHILIP seated himself beside Miriam as Adare and Josephine left the room. He noticed that her hair was dressed like Josephine's, and that in the soft depths of it was partly buried a rose.

"Do you know—I sometimes think that I am half dreaming," he said. "All this seems too wonderful to be true—you, and Josephine, almost a thousand miles out of the world. Even flowers like that which you wear in your hair—hot-house flowers!"

There was a strange sweetness in Miriam's smile, a smile softened by something that was almost pathetic, a touch of sadness.

"That is the one thing we keep alive out of the world I used to know—roses," she said. "The first roots came from my babyhood home, and we have grown them here for more than twenty years. Of course Josephine has shown you our little hothouse?"

"Yes," lied Philip. Then he added, finding her clear eyes resting on him steadily, "And you have never grown lonesome up here?"

"Never. I am sorry that we ever went back into that other world, even for a day. This has been paradise. We have always been happy. And you?" she asked suddenly. "Do you sometimes wish for that other world?"

"I have been out of it four years—with the exception of a short break. I never want to go back. Josephine has made my paradise, as you have made another man's."

He fancied, as she turned her face from him, that he heard a little catch in her breath. But she faced him again quickly.

"We have been happy. No woman in the world has been happier than I. And you—four years? In that time you have not heard much music. Shall I play for you?"

She rose and went to the piano without waiting for him to reply. Philip leaned back and partly closed his eyes as she began to play. The spell of music held him silent, and neither spoke until Josephine and her father returned. Philip did not catch the laughing words Adare addressed to his wife. In the door Josephine had stopped. To his surprise, she was dressed in her red coat and hood, and her feet were moccasined. She made a quick little signal to him.

"I am ready, Philip," she said.

He arose, fearing that his tongue might betray him if he replied to her in words. Adare came unwittingly to his assistance.

"You'll get used to this before the winter is over, Philip," he exclaimed banteringly. "Metoosin once called Josephine 'Wapikunoo'—the White Owl, and the name has stuck ever since. I haven't known Mignonne to miss a walk on a moonlit winter night since I can remember. But I prefer my airings in the day. Eh, Miriam?"

"And there is no moon to-night," laughed his wife.

"Hush!—but there is Philip!" whispered Adare loudly. "It may be that our Josephine will prefer the darker nights after this. Can you remember—"

Josephine was pulling Philip through the door, laughing back over her shoulder. As soon as they were in the hall she caught his arm excitedly.

"Let us hurry to your room," she urged. "You can dress and slip out unseen, leaving Jean and me alone. You are sure—he wants to see me—alone?"

There was a tremble in her voice now.

"Yes."

They came to his door, and he tapped on it lightly. Instantly it was opened. Josephine stared at Jean as she darted in.

"Jean—you have something to tell me?" she whispered, no longer hiding the fear in her face. "You want to see me— alone?"

"Oui, M'selle," murmured Jean, turning to Philip. "If M'sieur Philip can arrange for us to be alone."

"I will be gone in a moment," said Philip, hastily beginning to put on heavier garments. "Lock the door, Jean. It will not do to be interrupted now."

When he was ready Josephine went to him, her eyes shining softly. Jean turned to the window.

"You—your faith in me is beautiful," she said gratefully, so low that only he could hear her. "I don't deserve it, Philip."

For a moment he pressed her hand, his face telling her more than he could trust his lips to speak. Jean heard him turn the key in the lock, and he turned quickly.

"I have thought that it would be better for you to go out by the window, m'sieur,"

"You are right," agreed Philip, relocking the door.

Jean raised the window. As Philip dropped himself outside, the half-breed said,

"Go no farther than the edge of the forest, m'sieur. We will turn the light low and draw the curtain. When the curtain is raised again return to us as quickly as you can. Remember, m'sieur —and go no farther than the edge of the forest."

The window dropped behind him, and he turned toward the dark wall of spruce. There were six inches of fresh snow on the ground, and the clouds were again drifting out of the sky. Here and there a star shone through, but the moon was only a pallid haze beyond the gray-black thickness above. In the first shelter of the spruce and balsam Philip paused. He found himself a seat by brushing the snow from a log, and lighted his pipe. Steadily he kept his eyes on the curtained window. What was happening there now? To what was Josephine listening in these tense minutes of waiting?

Even as he stared through the darkness to that one lighter spot in the gloom, he knew that the world was changing for the woman he loved. He believed Jean, and he knew that Jean was now telling her the story of that day and the preceding night—the story which he had said would destroy the hopes she had built up, throw their plans into ruin, perhaps even disclose to him the secret which they had been fighting to hide. What could that story be? And what effect was it having on Josephine? The minutes passed slowly—with an oppressive slowness. Three times he lighted matches to look at his watch. Five minutes passed—ten, fifteen. He rose from the log and paced back and forth, making a beaten path in the snow. It was taking Jean a long time to tell the story.

And then, suddenly, a flood of light shot out into the night. The curtain was raised! It was Jean's signal to him, and with a wildly beating heart he responded to it.

CHAPTER XIX

THE window was open when Philip came to it, and Jean was waiting to give him an assisting hand. The moment he was in the room he turned to look at Josephine. She was gone. Almost angrily he whirled upon the half-breed, who had lowered the window and was now drawing the curtain. It was with an effort that he held back the words on his lips. Jean saw that effort, and shrugged his shoulders with an appreciative gesture.

"It is partly my fault that she is not here, m'sieur," he explained. "She would have told you nothing of what has passed between us—not as much, perhaps, as I. She will see you in the morning."

"And there's damned little consolation at the present moment in that," gritted Philip, with clenched hands. "Jean—I'm ready to fight now! I feel as a rat must feel when it's cornered.

I've got to jump pretty soon—in some direction—or I'll bust. It's impossible—"

Jean's hand fell softly upon his arm.

"M'sieur, you would cut off this right arm if it would give you Josephine?"

"I'd cut off my head!" exploded Philip.

"Do you remember that it was only a few hours ago that I said she could never be yours in this world?" Croisset reminded him, in the same quiet voice. "And now, when even I say there is hope, can you not make me have the confidence in you that I must have—if we win?"

Philip's face relaxed. In silence he gripped Jean's hand.

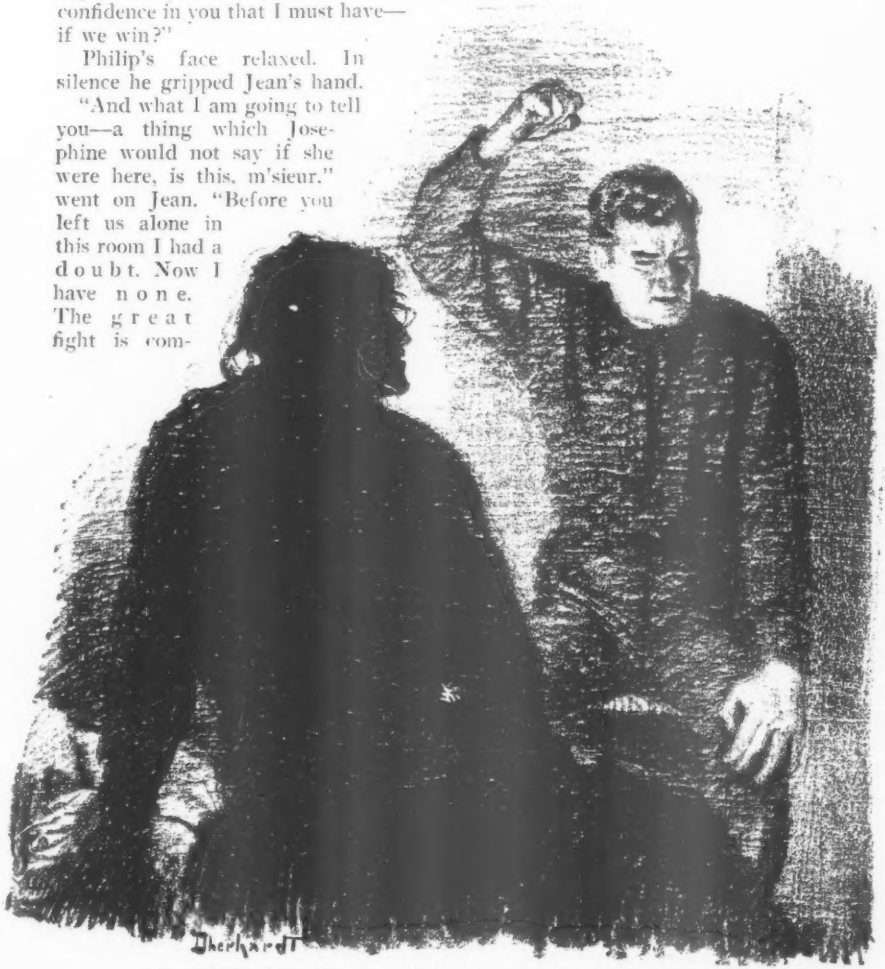
"And what I am going to tell you—a thing which Josephine would not say if she were here, is this, m'sieur," went on Jean. "Before you left us alone in this room I had a doubt. Now I have none. The great fight is coming. And in that fight all the spirits of *Kisamunito* must be with us. You will have fighting enough. And it will be such fighting as you will remember to the end of your days. But until the last word is said—until the last hour, you must be as you have been. I repeat that. Have you faith enough in me to believe?"

"Yes, I believe," said Philip. "It seems inconceivable,—but I believe."

Jean moved to the door.

"Good night, m'sieur," he said.

"Good night, Jean."



"Jean—I'm ready to fight now! I feel like a rat must feel when it's cornered."

FOR a few moments after Croisset had left him, Philip stood motionless. Then he locked the door. Until he was alone he did not know what a restraint he had put upon himself. Jean's words, the mysterious developments of the evening, the half promise of the fulfillment of his one great hope—had all worked him into a white heat of unrest. He knew that he could not stay in his room, that it would be impossible for him to sleep. And he was not in a condition to rejoin Adare and his wife. He wanted to walk—to find relief in physical exertion. Of a sudden his mind was made up. He extinguished the light. Then he reopened the window, and dropped out into the night once more.

He made his way once more to the edge of the forest. He did not stop this time, but plunged deeper into its gloom. Moon and stars were beginning to lighten the white waste ahead of him. He knew that he could not lose himself, as he could follow his own trail back. He paused for a moment in the shelter of a spruce to fill his pipe and light it. Then he went on. Now that he was alone he tried to discover some key to all that Jean had said to him. After all, his first guess had not been so far out of the way: it was a physical force of some sort that was Josephine's deadliest menace.

What was this force? How could he associate it with the baby back in Adare House? Unconsciously his mind leaped to Thoreau, the free trader, as a possible solution, but in the same breath he discarded that as unreasonable. Such a force as Thoreau and his gang would be dealt with by Adare himself, or the forest people. There was something more. Vainly he racked his brain for some possible enlightenment.

He had walked ten minutes without noting the direction he was taking, when he was brought to a standstill with a sudden shock. Not twenty paces from him he heard voices. He dodged behind a tree, and an instant later two figures hurried past him. A cry rose to his lips, but he choked it back. One of the two was Jean. The other was Josephine!

For a moment he stood staring after them, his hand clutching at the bark of the tree. A feeling that was almost physical pain swept over him as he realized the truth. Josephine had not gone to her room. He understood now. She had purposely evaded him that she might be with Jean alone in the forest. Three days before, Philip would not have thought so much of this. Now it hurt. Josephine had given him her love, yet in spite of that she was placing greater confidence in the half-breed than in him. That was what hurt—at first. In the next breath his overwhelming faith in her returned to *him*. There was some tremendous reason for her being here with Jean. What was it? He stepped out from behind the tree as he stared after them.

His eyes caught the pale glow of something that he had not seen before. It was a campfire, the illumination of it only faintly visible deeper in the forest. Toward this Josephine and Jean were hurrying. A low exclamation of excitement broke from his lips as a still greater understanding dawned upon him. His hand trembled. His breath came quickly. In that camp there waited for Josephine and Croisset those who were playing the other half of the game in which he had been given a blind man's part! He did not reason or argue with himself. He accepted the fact. And no longer with hesitation his hand fell to his automatic, and he followed swiftly after Josephine and the half-breed.

HE began to see what Jean had meant. In the room he had simply prepared Josephine for this visit. It was in the forest—and not at Adare House, that the big test of the night was to come.

It was not curiosity that made him follow them now. More than ever he was determined to keep his faith with Jean and the girl, and he made up his mind to draw only near enough to give his assistance if it should become necessary. Roused by the conviction that Josephine and the half-breed were not making this mysterious tryst without imperiling themselves, he stopped as the campfire burst into full view, and examined his pistol.

Philip now could see figures about the fire. There were three, one sitting, and two standing. The fire was not more than a hundred yards ahead of him, and he saw no tent. A moment later Josephine and Jean entered the circle of fire-glow, and the sitting man sprang to his feet. As Philip drew nearer he noticed that Jean stood close to his companion, and that the girl's hand was clutching his arm. He heard no word spoken, and yet he could see by the action of the man who had been sitting that he was giving the others instructions which took them away from the fire, deeper into the gloom of the forest, and left him alone with Josephine and the half-breed.

Seventy yards from the fire, Philip dropped breathlessly behind a cedar log and rested his arm over the top of it. In his hand was his automatic. It covered the spot of gloom into which the two men had disappeared among the trees. If anything should happen—he was ready.

In the fire-shadows he could not make out distinctly the features of the third man. He was not dressed like the others. He wore knickerbockers and high laced boots. His face was beardless. Beyond these things Philip could make out nothing more. The three drew close together, and only now and then did he catch the low murmur of a voice. Not once did he hear Jean. For ten minutes he crouched motionless, his eyes shifting from the strange tableau to the spot of gloom where the others were hidden.

Then, suddenly, Philip saw Josephine spring back from her companions. Jean went to her side. He could hear her voice now, steady and swift—vibrant with something that thrilled him, though he could not understand a word that she was speaking. She paused, and he could see that she was tense and waiting. The other replied. His words must have been brief, for it seemed he could scarcely have spoken when Josephine turned her back upon him and walked quickly out into the forest. For another moment Jean Croisset stood menacingly close to the other. Then he followed.

NOT until he knew they were safe did Philip rise from his concealment. He made his way cautiously back to Adare House, and reëntered his room through the window. Half an hour later, dressed so that he revealed no evidence of his excursion in the snow, he knocked at Jean's door. The half-breed opened it. He showed some surprise when he saw his visitor.

"I thought you were in bed, m'sieur," he exclaimed. "Your room was dark."

"Sleep?" laughed Philip. "Do you think that I can sleep to-night, Jean?"

"As well as some others, perhaps," replied Jean, offering him a chair. "Will you smoke, m'sieur?"

Philip lighted a cigar, and pointed to the other's moccasined feet, wet with melting snow.

"You have been out," he said. "Why didn't you invite me to go with you?"

"It was a part of our night's business to be alone," responded Jean. "Josephine was with me. She is in her room now, with the baby."

"Does Adare know you have returned?"

"Josephine has told him. He is to believe that I went out to see a trapper over on the Pipestone."

"It is strange," mused Philip, speaking half to himself. "A strong reason indeed it must be to make Josephine say these false things."

"It is like driving sharp claws into her soul," affirmed Jean.

"I believe that I know something of what happened to-night, Jean. Are we any nearer to the end—to the big fight?"

"It is coming, m'sieur. I am more than ever certain of that. The third night from this will tell us."

"And on that night—"

Philip waited expectantly.

"We will know," replied Jean in a voice which convinced Philip that the half-breed would say no more. Then Jean added, "It will not be strange if Josephine does not go with you on the sledge-drive to-morrow, m'sieur. It will also be curious if there is not some change in her, for she has been under a great strain. But make as if you did not see it. Pass your time as much as possible with the Master of Adare. Let

him not guess. And now I am going to ask you to let me go to bed. My head aches. It is from the blow."

"And there is nothing I can do for you, Jean?"

"Nothing, m'sieur."

At the door Philip turned.

"I have got a grip on myself now, Jean," he said. "I wont fail you. I'll do as you say. But remember, we are to have the fight at the end!"

IN his room Philip sat up for a time and smoked. Then he went to bed.



He dodged behind a tree, and an instant later two figures hurried past him. A cry rose to his lips, but he gone to her room. She

Half a dozen times during the night he awoke from a restless slumber. Twice he struck a match to look at his watch. It was still dark when he got up and dressed. From five until six he tried to read. He was delighted when Metoosin came to the door and told him that breakfast would be ready in half an hour. This gave him just time to shave.

He expected to eat alone with Adare again this morning, and his heart jumped with both surprise and joy when Josephine came out into the hall to meet him. She was very pale. Her eyes told him that she had passed a sleepless night. But she was smiling bravely, and when she offered him her hand he caught her suddenly in his arms and held her close to his breast while he kissed her lips, and then her shining hair.

"Philip!" she protested. "Philip—"

He laughed softly, and for a moment his face was close against hers.

"My brave little darling! I understand," he whispered. "I know what a night you've had. But there is nothing to fear. Nothing shall harm you, nothing, nothing!"

She drew away from him gently, and there was a mist in her eyes. But he had brought a bit of color into her face. And there was a glow behind the tears. Then, her lip quivering, she caught his arm.

"Philip, the baby is sick—and I am afraid. I haven't told Father. Come!"

He went with her to the room at the end of the hall. The



choked it back. One of the two was Jean. The other was Josephine. She had not had purposely evaded him.

Indian woman was crooning softly over a cradle. She fell silent as Josephine and Philip entered, and they bent over the little flushed face in the bed. Its breath came tightly, gaspingly, and Josephine clutched Philip's hand, and her voice broke in a sob.

"Feel, Philip—its little face—the fever—"

"You must call your mother and father," he said after a moment. "Why haven't you done this before, Josephine?"

"The fever came on suddenly—within the last half-hour," she whispered tensely. "And I wanted you to tell me what to do, Philip. Shall I call them—now?"

He nodded.

"Yes."

In an instant she was out of the room. A few moments later she returned, followed by Adare and his wife. Philip was startled by the look that came into Miriam's face as she fell on her knees beside the crib. She was ghastly white. Dumbly Adare stood and gazed down on the little human mite he had grown to worship. And then there came through his beard a great broken breath that was half a sob.

Josephine laid her cheek against his arm for a moment, and said,

"You and Philip go to breakfast, *mon père*. I am going to give baby some of the medicine the Churchill doctor left with me. I was frightened at first. But I'm not now. Mother and I will have him out of the fever shortly."

Philip caught her glance, and took Adare by the arm. Alone they went into the breakfast-room. Adare laughed uneasily as he seated himself opposite Philip.

"I don't like to see the little beggar like that," he said, trying to shake off



In his hand was his automatic. If anything should happen—he was ready.

his own and Philip's fears with a smile. "It was Mignonne who scared me—her face. She has nursed so many sick babies that it frightened me to see her so white. I thought he might be—dying."

"Cutting teeth, maybe," volunteered Philip.

"Too young," replied Adare.

"Or a touch of indigestion. That brings fever."

"Whatever it is, Josephine will soon have him kicking and pulling my thumb again," said Adare with confidence. "Did she ever tell you about the little Indian baby she found in a tepee?"

"No."

"It was in the dead of winter. Mignonne was out with the dogs, ten miles to the south. Captain scented the thing—the Indian tepee. It was abandoned—banked high with snow—and over it was the smallpox signal. She was about to go on, but Captain made her go to the flap of the tepee. The beast knew, I guess. And Josephine—my God, I wouldn't have let her do it for ten years of my life! There had been smallpox in that tent; the smell of it was still warm. Ugh! And she looked in! And she says she heard something that was no louder than the peep of a bird. Into that death-hole she went—and brought out a baby. The parents, starving and half crazed after their sickness, had left it—thinking it was dead.

"Josephine brought it to a cabin close to home. In two weeks she had that kid out rolling in the snow. Then the mother and father heard something of what had happened and came to us as fast as their legs could bring them. You should have seen that Indian mother's gratitude! She didn't think it so terrible to leave the baby unburied. She thought it was dead. Pasoo is the Indian father's name. Several times a year they come to see Josephine, and Pasoo brings her the choicest furs of his trap-line. And each time he says *'Nipa tu mo-wao,'* which means that some day he hopes to be able to kill for her. Nice, isn't it—to have friends who'll murder your enemies for you if you just give 'em the word?"

"One never can tell," began Philip cautiously. "A time might come when she would need friends—"

He paused, busying himself with his steak. There was a note of triumph, of exultation, in Adare's low laugh.

"Have you ever seen a fire run through a pitch-dry forest?" he asked. "That is the way word that Josephine wanted friends would sweep through a thousand square miles of this Northland. And the answer to it would be like the answer of stray wolves to the cry of the hunt-pack!"

"You could not have friends like that down there, in the cities," said Philip.

Adare's face clouded.

"I am not a pessimist," he answered, after a moment. "It has been one of my few Commandments always to look for the bright spot if there is one. But, down there, I have seen so many wolves, human wolves. It seems strange to me that so many people should have the same mad desire for the dollar that the wolves of the forest have for warm, red, quivering flesh. I have known a wolf-pack to kill five times what it could eat in a night, and kill again the next night, and still the next—always more than enough. They are like the dollar-hunters—only beast. Among such, one cannot have solid friends—not very many who will not sell you for a price. I was afraid to trust Josephine down among them. I am glad that it was you she met, Philip. You were of the North—a foster-child, if not born there."

THAT day was one of gloom in Adare House. The baby's fever grew steadily worse. The lamps were lighted, when Miriam came through the door. She was swaying, her hands reaching out gropingly, her face the gray of ash that crumbles from an ember. Adare sprang to meet her, a strange cry on his lips, and Philip was a step behind her. He heard her moaning words, and as he rushed past them into the hall he knew that she had fallen fainting into her husband's arms.

In the doorway to Josephine's room he paused. She was there, kneeling beside the little crib, and her face as she lifted it to him was tearless, but filled with a grief that went to the quick of his soul. He did not need to look into the crib as she rose unsteadily, clutching

a hand at her heart, as if to keep it from breaking. He knew what he would see. And now he went to her and drew her close in his strong arms, whispering the pent-up passion of the things that were in his heart, until at last her arms stole up about his neck, and she sobbed on his breast like a child. How long he held her there, whispering over and over again the words that made her grief his own, he could not have told; but after a time he knew that some one else had entered the room, and he raised his eyes to meet those of John Adare. The face of the great, grizzled giant had aged five years, but his head was erect. He looked at Philip squarely. He put out his two hands, and one rested on Josephine's head, the other on Philip's shoulder.

"My children," he said gently, and in those two words were weighted the strength and consolation of the world.

He pointed to the door, motioning Philip to take Josephine away, and then he went and stood at the cribside, his great shoulders hunched over, his head bowed down.

Tenderly Philip led Josephine from the room. Adare had taken his wife to her room, and when they entered she was sitting in a chair, staring and speechless. And now Josephine turned to Philip, taking his face between her two hands, and her soul looked at him through a blinding mist of tears.

"My Philip," she whispered, and drew his face down and kissed him. "Go to him now. We will come—soon."

He returned to Adare like one in a dream—a dream that was grief and pain, with its one golden thread of joy. Jean was there now, and the Indian woman; and the master of Adare had the still little babe huddled up against his breast. It was some time before they could induce him to give it to Moanne. Then, suddenly, he shook himself like a great bear, and crushed Philip's shoulders in his hands.

"God knows I'm sorry for you, boy," he cried brokenly. "It's hurt me—terribly. But *you*—it must be like the cracking of your soul. And Josephine, my little flower! She is with her mother?"

"Yes," replied Philip. "Come. Let us go. We can do nothing here."

"I understand," said Adare almost roughly, in his struggle to steady himself. "You're thinking of *me*, boy. God bless you for that. You go to Josephine and Miriam. It is your place. Jean and I will go into the big room."

Philip left them at Adare's room and went to his own, leaving the door open that he might hear Josephine if she came out into the hall. He was there to meet her when she appeared a little later. They went to Moanne. And at last all things were done, and the lights were turned low in Adare House.

PHILIP did not take off his clothes that night, nor did Jean and Metoosin. In the early dawn they went out together to the little garden of crosses. Close to the side of Iowaka, Jean pointed out a plot.

"Josephine would say the little one will sleep best there, close to *her*," he said. "She will care for it, m'sieur. She will know, and understand, and keep its little soul bright and happy in Heaven."

And there they digged. No one in Adare House heard the cautious fall of pick and spade.

With morning came a strangely clear sun. Out of the sky had gone the last haze of cloud. Jean crossed himself, and said:

"She knows—and has sent sunshine instead of storm."

Hours later it was Adare who stood over the little grave, and said words deep and strong, and quivering with emotion, and it was Jean and Matoosin who lowered the tiny casket into the frozen earth. Philip was glad when it was over, and Adare was once more in his big room, and Josephine with her mother. He did not even want Jean's company. He went to bed early, and strangely enough slept more soundly than he had been able to sleep for some time.

When Philip awoke the following morning his first thought was that this was the day of the third night. He had scarcely dressed when Adare's voice greeted him from outside the door. It was different now—filled with the old cheer and booming hopefulness, and

Philip smiled as he thought how this stricken giant of the wilderness was rising out of his own grief to comfort Josephine and him. They were all at breakfast, and Philip was delighted to find Josephine looking much better than he had expected. Miriam was white and wan. Her hands trembled. She spoke little. Tenderly Adare tried to raise her spirits.

During the rest of that day Philip saw but little of Josephine, and he made no effort to intrude himself upon her. Late in the afternoon Jean asked him if he had made friends with the dogs, and Philip told him of his experience with them. Not until nine o'clock that night did he know why the half-breed had asked.

At that hour Adare House had sunk into quiet. Miriam and her husband had gone to bed; the lights were low. For an hour Philip had listened for the footsteps which he knew he would hear tonight. At last he knew that Josephine had come out into the hall. He heard Jean's low voice, their retreating steps, and then the opening and closing of the door that let them out into the night. There was a short silence. Then the door reopened, and some one returned through the hall. The steps stopped at his own door—a knock—and a moment later he was standing face to face with Croisset.

"Throw on your coat and cap and come with me, m'sieur," he cried in a low voice. "And bring your pistol!"

Without a word Philip obeyed. By the time they stood out in the night his blood was racing in a wild anticipation. Josephine had disappeared. Jean gripped his arm.

"To-night—something may happen," he said, in a voice that was as hard and cold as the blue lights of the aurora in the polar sky. "It is—possible. We may need your help. I would have asked Metoosin, but it would have made him suspicious of something—and he knows nothing. You have made friends with the dogs? You know Captain?"

"Yes!"

"Then go to them—go as fast as you can, m'sieur. And if you hear a shot tonight—or a loud cry from out there in the forest, free the dogs swiftly, Captain first, and run with them to our trail, shouting *'Kill! Kill! Kill!'* with every breath you take, and don't stop so long as there is a footprint in the snow ahead of you or a human bone to pick! Do you understand, m'sieur?"

Jean's eyes were points of flame in the gloom.

"Do you understand?"

"Yes," gasped Philip. "But—Jean—"

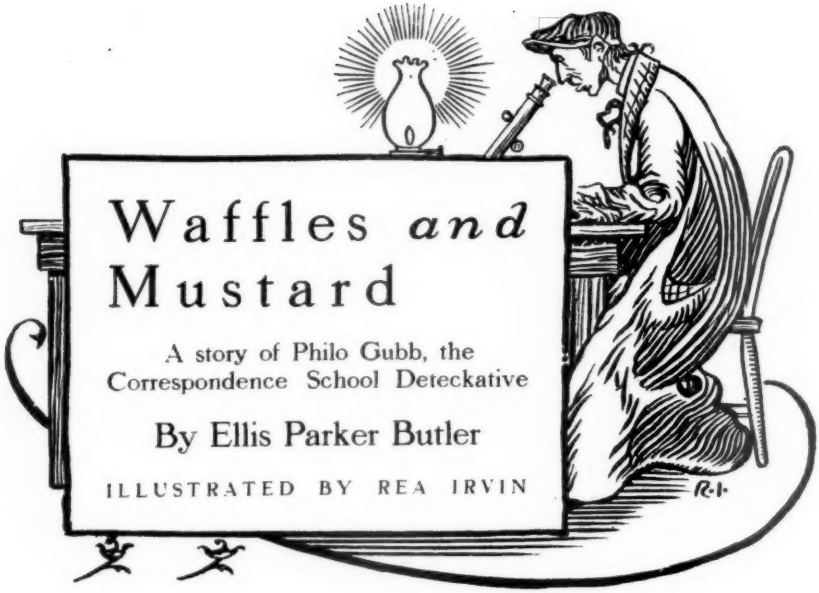
"If you understand—that is all," interrupted Jean. "If there is a peril in what we are doing this night, the pack will be worth more to us than a dozen men. If anything happens to us they will be our avengers. Go! There is not one moment for you to lose. Remember—a shot—a single cry!"

His voice, the glitter in his eyes, told Philip this was no time for words. He turned, and ran swiftly across the clearing in the direction of the dog-pit. Ten minutes later he came into a gloom warm with the smell of beasts. Eyes of fire glared at him. The snapping of fangs and the snarling of savage throats greeted him. One by one he called the names of the dogs he remembered—called them over and over again, advancing fearlessly among them, until he dropped upon his knees with his hand on the chain that held Captain. From there he talked to them, and their whines answered him.

Then he fell silent—listening. He could hear his own heart beat. Every fiber in his body was a-quiver with excitement and a strange fear. The hand that rested on Captain's collar trembled. In the distance an owl hooted, and the first note of it sent a redhot fire through him. Still farther away a wolf howled. Then came a silence in which he thought he could hear the rush of blood through his own throbbing veins.

With his fingers at the steel snap on Captain's collar, he waited.

The next installment of *"God's Country—and the Woman"* will be in the December Red Book, on the news-stands November 23rd.



Waffles *and* Mustard

A story of Philo Gubb, the Correspondence School Deteckative

By Ellis Parker Butler

ILLUSTRATED BY REA IRVIN

"GUBB, come across the hall here!"

Philo Gubb, the Correspondence School detective, looked up from the labor in which he was engaged and blinked at Lawyer Higgins.

"At the present time I am momently engaged upon a case," said Mr. Gubb. "As soon as I am disengaged away from what I am at, I expect to be engaged at the next thing I have to do. I shouldn't wish to assume to be rude, Mr. Higgins, but when a deteckative is working up a case, and has a sign on his door 'Out—Back at Midnight,' he generally means he aint receiving callers on no account."

"That's all right," said Higgins briskly, "but this is business. I've got a real job for you."

"I am engaged upon a real job now," said Philo Gubb. "If what you've got is a job in the paper-hanging and decorating line, I aim to be excused from such until I detect what I'm detecting. Even if a deteckative is a paper-hanger by trade he's got to work at detecting once in a while or he'll get clumsy at it."

"This is a detective job," said Mr. Higgins. "We want you to find a man, and if you do, there's two hundred dollars in it for you. What sort of a job is it you have on hand?"

"I am searching out the whereabouts of a lost party," said Gubb earnestly. "I'm investigating clues at the present time and moment."

Higgins stepped inside the door. He walked to where Philo Gubb sat at an elaborate mahogany desk, and looked at the apparatus Mr. Gubb was using.

"What the dickens?" he asked.

Detective (and paper-hanger) Gubb had recently come into the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars through failing to discover the hiding place of a certain Chicago gentleman who wished to avoid public view for a while, and he was enjoying the wealth thus placed in his hands. His office on the second floor of the Opera House Block, although still littered with pails of paste, folding trestles, bundles of wall-paper and packages of dry color, showed changes. The cot on which Mr. Gubb had been accustomed to sleep had been replaced by a folding bed, which — when Mr. Gubb happened to think about closing it — closed into the semblance of a mahogany book-case containing sixty-four volumes of The History of The World, bound in morocco. They were not real books.

They were dummy books. A large oak Morris chair upholstered in red velour with green roses had also been added to Mr. Gubb's furniture, but the gem of all was a stately mahogany desk with a mahogany office chair to match. Mr. Gubb was now sitting in the chair, and upon the slide of the desk were grouped a number of small articles, and a large and powerful microscope. Through the lens of the microscope Mr. Gubb was inspecting something that looked like fraved yellow-brown wool yarn. At Mr. Higgins' exclamation, the Correspondence School detective looked up with annoyance.

"You don't expect to find your missing party in that wad of wool, do you, Gubb?" asked Mr. Higgins jestingly.

"Maybe I do, and maybe the operations of the deteckative mind are none of your particular affair when conducted in the private seclusion of my laboratory," said Gubb. "The common person is unacquainted with the intricacies of detection as learned from the lessons of the Rising Sun Deteckative Bureau's Correspondence School of Deteckating. If he wasn't, he wouldn't hire a deteckative—he'd detect for himself."

"Now, don't get mad," said Higgins. "It just struck me as funny. Looks as if you were hunting for fleas in a wisp of dog hair."

Philo Gubb looked up quickly. As a matter of fact, he had but a moment before found a flea in the wool he was examining, and the wool was indeed a wisp of dog hair. The party Mr. Gubb had been engaged to find was a dog, and Mr. Gubb was—by the inductive method of detecting—trying to reason out the location of the dog. From the dog's usual place of repose and domicile he had gathered the small articles that lay on his desk slide. They were a small bone, a china button, one half of the horn handle of a common table knife, a couple of pinches of clay, wisps of dog hair and several feathers that were evidently chicken feathers and of assorted breeds of chickens. By the aid of the microscope, Mr. Gubb was searching these articles for the slight indications that mean so much to detectives. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Gubb had not yet found anything from which he could deduce anything whatever, unless the flea in the wool might lead to the conclusion that the dog now, or once, had fleas.

"Tell you what I want," said Mr. Higgins: "I want you to find Mustard."

Detective Gubb swung suddenly in his chair and faced Mr. Higgins.

"I don't want nothing more to do with that will!" he said. "That will is a mean will, and a disgrace in every sense of the word, and I don't want to have anything more to do with it. When Mr. O'Hara made out that will he did a mean trick, and when he got me to sign my name to it as witness he did me a mean trick, and I don't want nothing more to do with it."

"I'm with you there!" said Higgins, laughing. "When O'Hara made his will so that my client couldn't get her rights at once he did a mean trick, and I dare say Mrs. Doblin will think so when she gets my bill. But, just the same, Gubb, you're in the detective business more or less, and it strikes me you ought to take a job when it's offered to you, no matter how you feel about some things connected with it. You signed the will as a witness and you can't give us any help, and this man Bilton, commonly known as Mustard on account of his yellow complexion and yellow hair, was the other witness, wasn't he? Now if you can't give us the information we want, and Mustard can, it looks to me as if it was your duty, as a fellow witness, to hunt him up. But we don't ask that. We're willing to pay you if you find him."

"Are you prepared to contract to say you'll pay me just for hunting for him?" asked Mr. Gubb.

"We'll give you two hundred dollars if you can produce Mustard here in Riverbank," said Higgins. "We'll give two hundred dollars to anyone who can produce him. There's your chance."

"The job I've took on to hunt up another missing party will occupy me 'most all day for quite a while, I guess," said Gubb, "but maybe I might put in what extra time I can spare looking for your party."

"Do it!" said Higgins. "I don't say

you're the best detective in the world, Gubb, but you do have luck. You must have a magic talisman."

"The operation of the deteckative mind is always like magic to the common folks," said Gubb gravely.

"All right then," said Higgins. "Two hundred if you find him. And now, will you just come across the hall for one minute?"



GUBB left his microscope reluctantly. He was sick and tired of the O'Hara will, but he followed Mr. Higgins.

The second floor of the Opera House Block was laid out in small offices arranged on two sides of a corridor. At one end of the corridor, brass-edged steps led straight down to the street; at the other end, the corridor turned at right angles to provide ingress, egress and regress (as Lawyer O'Hara would have said) to and from two offices fronting on another street. One of these offices had been for many years the office of Haddon O'Hara, who specialized in commercial law, collections and jokes. On the side, and to an extent of which no one had dreamed until his death, he bought assignments of mortgages, and he had thus accumulated a snug little fortune.

Life had been comparatively easy for O'Hara. He had early secured a reputation as a remarkably clever collector of doubtful accounts and had been engaged by a number of the local wholesalers. The insight into business thus gained led him to a reputation as a commercial lawyer. It was said he could draw a contract no one could break except himself.

On the streets and in his home and at his office,—except when at work on some especially difficult case,—his face always wore a quizzical smile. O'Hara seemed to enjoy himself every moment. Walking along the street he would suddenly stop some citizen, enunciate a dozen or twenty cryptic words, laugh, and proceed on his way, leaving the citizen to puzzle over the affair, lose interest in it and forget it. A week, a month or a year later O'Hara would stop the same citizen and utter ten more words, the key to the cryptic joke. Then, chuckling, he would hurry away, leaving enlightenment to come to the citizen, or not, according to the brightness or stupidity of the citizen. Sometimes the citizen saw the joke, and sometimes he did not, but O'Hara had a cutting wit for those who did not see the point, and it became the custom for all to pretend to see O'Hara's jokes whether they were seen or not.

After that O'Hara had part of his fun in uttering cryptic words that were not at all cryptic but mere nonsense and, after a suitable period, uttering a key that was not at all a key but more nonsense. He had a lot of fun. His keen brain felt equal to making fun of the whole town and not letting the town know it. Money came to him easily; he had no wife; his pleasure was in his books—and he was probably a happy man. But he died. He died and left a will.

For many years, O'Hara lived alone with his mother. Then his mother's health failed a little and she brought her grandchild, O'Hara's niece and an orphan, from an orphan home, and Dolly O'Hara helped with the housework. She was twenty years younger than O'Hara. He was kind to her but never paid her any especial attention, his favorite women being the more mature and more intellectual, with whom he could fence and whet his mind to keener brightness. Mrs. O'Hara died, and Dolly became the housekeeper. She was eighteen, and there might have been some gossip about the girl's living alone in the house with O'Hara, but O'Hara forestalled it by hiring old Mrs. Mullarky.

Dolly O'Hara mourned her grandmother sincerely, and to take her mind off her mourning, O'Hara bought her a pup and had a dog-house built and put in the yard. He christened the pup himself, naming it Waffles because, he said, the minute he saw the pup it reminded him of Dolly. He said he couldn't understand why, and it puzzled him, and he thought about it for days and days,

and wrestled with the problem, and at last he understood. The pup was just the color of the waffles Dolly baked—"baked" is O'Hara's word, not mine. So he bought Waffles and brought him home to Dolly, and the girl loved the dog from the first minute. The truth was that Dolly loved O'Hara as deeply as ever a girl loved her own father, and she loved the dog for O'Hara's sake as much as for the dog's sake. Then, just as the dog had outgrown puppyhood, O'Hara died.

His will was found in the safe in his office. Old Judge Mackinnon, who shared the office with O'Hara, found the will the day after O'Hara died. It was in a white legal envelope endorsed, "*My Will. Haddon O'Hara.*" The Judge opened the envelope—it was not sealed—and took out the will. The will was not filled in on a printed form—it was a holograph will, written in O'Hara's own hand. It began in the usual formal manner and there were two bequests. The first read: "To my niece, Dorothy O'Hara, since she is so extremely fond of her dog Waffles as to seem to require no other companionship, I give and bequeath the dog-house now on my property at 342 Locust Street, Riverbank, Iowa, and I advise her to remove the said dog-house and to make her home in it at any suitable place, and I trust that before she falls asleep each night she will lie awake and think of the undersigned testator." The second read: "Secondly, to my cousin Ardelia Doblin I bequeath the entire remainder and residue of my estate," etc.

Judge Mackinnon frowned as he read these two bequests. He knew Ardelia Doblin as a spiteful, scandal-mongering woman. To cut off Dolly O'Hara with a dog-house and an unkind mention in the will and then give his entire estate to Ardelia Doblin might be O'Hara's idea of a joke, but the Judge did not like it. He read the final clause, appointing him sole executor without bond. O'Hara's signature was correctly appended. The will was dated July 1st, 1913. It was witnessed by Philo Gubb and William Bilton. The Judge knew both witnesses. Gubb was the eccentric paper-hanger who thought he was a detective because he had taken a correspondence course, and Bilton was a jaundiced loafer about town, commonly called Mustard. The good old man sighed and was about to put the will back in the envelope when he noticed three letters at the bottom of the sheet. They were "P.T.O." Now "P.T.O." is an English abbreviation that means "Please Turn Over." The Judge turned the paper over.

Suddenly he smiled. Then he looked grave again. And then he grinned. After which he shook his head.

The reverse of the sheet contained a will exactly like that on the obverse. Word for word it was the same. Line for line, punctuation mark for punctuation mark, the two wills on the opposite sides of the sheet were identical except for two words. In the will the Judge was now reading, the name Sarah P. Kinsey was substituted for the name Ardelia Doblin. Like the other will, this was properly signed. The date was the same. The witnesses were the same. There were two wills, one written on one side of the sheet and the other written on the other side of the sheet, of the same date, with the same signature, and with the same witnesses. O'Hara had joked to the last.

"This is—this is a dickens of a joke!" exclaimed Judge Mackinnon. "O'Hara should not have done this!"

He shook his head sadly. He saw the property of Haddon O'Hara being dissipated in lawsuits over this remarkable will. He knew Sarah P. Kinsey as well as he knew Ardelia Doblin, and she was just such another mean, cantankerous individual. With such a will to be the cause of war they would fight to the last ditch. There would be appeals and more appeals and reversals, and costs and costs and costs. In the end the two women's lawyers would have the estate, the women would have nothing, and poor little Dolly O'Hara would have—well, she would have had peace, and she would have, at least, the dog-house.

"A joke's a joke, but you shouldn't have done this, O'Hara!" said the Judge. He could see O'Hara's smile as he indited the two wills.

There was nothing to do but notify the parties concerned. He went to see

Dolly O'Hara first and told her, as gently as he could, about the will before reading her the clause in which she was mentioned. She cried a little, softly, at first, and then she smiled bravely.

"You mustn't worry about it, Judge Mackinnon," she said. "I—of course I never thought what Uncle Haddon would do with his money. I sha'n't be helpless. I always expected he would marry sometime and that I should have to earn my living somewhere. He always gave me Waffle money. He called it Waffle money. He said he had given me the dog and it was his duty to see that I was not left with an unsupportable dog on my hands. I saved the money. I have over two hundred dollars. And—and we used to joke about the dog-house. He always said he would leave it to me in his will. Uncle Haddon loved to joke, Judge Mackinnon."

"He was a young joking jackanapes!" said Judge Mackinnon angrily. "He might have left you this house, at least."

Ardelia Doblin and Sarah P. Kinsey took the matter in quite a different spirit. It was remarkable how suddenly each decided that the side of the will leaving the money to the other must be some mistake and that a good lawyer could soon prove it to be a mistake. Mrs. Doblin could hardly wait until Judge Mackinnon was out of the house before she hurried down to see Lawyer Higgins, and—as a matter of record—Mrs. Kinsey did not wait until the Judge was ready to go, but put on her hat in his presence and almost pushed him out of the door, so eager was she to hurry down to see Lawyer Burch.

Ten hours later the O'Hara will was the one matter talked about in Riverbank. It was a nut to crack and a very tough one. Evidently there must be some clue leading to the solution of the mystery — some well-hidden, cleverly-planned key such as Haddon O'Hara would undoubtedly have left in perpetrating such a joke. Common sense was sufficient to tell anyone that O'Hara could not have written both wills simultaneously. It was undoubtedly true that he had written one will on one side of the paper, after which he had turned the paper over and had written the other will on the other side of the paper. The difficulty was to tell which side he had written last.

Lawyer Higgins, Lawyer Burch and Judge Mackinnon went over both sides of the paper with a microscope, seeking some sign that would indicate that it was written last. There was no sign. The same ink was used on both sides. O'Hara's writing was the same on both sides. Often, in writing as many words as occupied both sides of the paper in question, a man's hand grows involuntarily weary. Some men begin all documents in a certain neat, evenly spaced penmanship which becomes looser and uneven as they proceed until, at the last line, the letters are often twice the size of those at the beginning. There was nothing of this sort. The last line on either page was as neat and clean-cut as the first line on the opposite page. There seemed to be absolutely nothing on which the greatest penmanship expert could base a plea that either side was, in fact, the *last* will of Haddon O'Hara. Either might be the last.

Nothing was left untested by Higgins and Burch. The two sides of the paper on which the wills were written were subjected to the minutest scrutiny. It was found that the paper had a watermark: "Olympic Bond 1912." From the Dublin side of the paper this read properly; from the Kinsey side it read reversed. Lawyer Burch, for Mrs. Kinsey, claimed that this proved the Kinsey will to be the latest will, because in the nature of things a man would use the right side of a sheet of paper first, and the right side would be the side from which the watermark could be read properly. Therefore, having written the Doblin will on the right side, Mr. O'Hara had turned the paper over to write the Kinsey will, which was therefore the last will and testament.

"You try to tell that to the courts!" was all Higgins said. As a matter of fact, when they examined the paper remaining in O'Hara's desk some was found with the watermark one way and some with it the other. They next considered the witnesses.

Each will was witnessed by the same pair of witnesses, and these were Philo

Gubb and W. Bilton. It was no trouble at all to get Philo Gubb to tell about signing the will. Judge Mackinnon crossed the hall and brought Philo Gubb to the office.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Gubb. "I signed my signature onto that document two times as requested so to do by the late deceased. He come over to my official deteckative headquarters and asked me to step across and do him the pleasure of a small favor and I done so. Yes, sir, that's my signed signature. And that's my signed signature also likewise."

"Did he say anything, Mr. Gubb?" asked the Judge.

"He says, 'Gubb, this is my last will and testament, and I wish you to sign your signature onto it as a witness.' So he put the paper in front of me. 'Where'll I sign it?' I says. 'Sign it right here under Mr. Bilton's name,' he says. So I signed my signature like he told me."

"Yes," said the Judge, "and Mr. O'Hara blotted it with a piece of blotting paper, did he not?"

"He so done," said Mr. Gubb.

"And then what?"

"Then he turned the paper over," said Mr. Gubb, "and he says, 'Now please sign this one.' So I signed it."

"Under Mr. Bilton's name again?" said the Judge.

"Why, no," said the detective-paperhanger. "Not under it, because it wasn't located nowhere to have an under to it. Mr. Bilton hadn't signed on that side yet."

There was an instant sensation.

"Bilton hadn't signed that side?" said Mr. Higgins. "Which side hadn't he signed?"

"The other side from the side he had signed," said Mr. Gubb.

"Did you notice which side he had not signed?" insisted Mr. Higgins. "Was it this side that mentions Mrs. Doblin, or this side that mentions Mrs. Kinsey? Which was it?"

Mr. Gubb took the paper and examined it carefully. He turned it over and over.

"Couldn't say," he said briefly.

"In other words," said Mr. Burch, "you signed one side before Mr. Bilton signed and one side after he signed, but you don't know which?"

"Yes, sir, I don't," said Mr. Gubb.

"So," said Judge Mackinnon, with a smile, "you can swear you signed both these wills as witness, but you have no idea which you signed last, Mr. Gubb."

"E-zactly so!" said Mr. Gubb with emphasis.

"Now, just a minute," said Mr. Burch. "One of these Bilton signatures is '*M. Bilton*' and the other is '*Max Bilton.*' You don't recall which was on the paper when you signed, do you?"

"Mr. Burch," said Mr. Gubb, "on that day in question I was doing a job of paper-hanging and decorating for Mrs. Slimmins, on Greenwood Street, and when I was ready to start to it I noticed my paste table was split down the middle, so I lighted my oil stove and set my glue pot onto it, for to glue up my paste table. Mr. O'Hara called me just then to sign my signatures, and with a gluepot on the fire I wasn't taking no extra time to find out if a no-account feller like Mustard Bilton signed his name *M.* or *Max* or *Methuselah*. No, sir."

"Do you know where Mustard Bilton is now?" asked Judge Mackinnon.

"Don't know," said Mr. Gubb. "Wish I did."

"Why?" asked Mr. Higgins.

"I got a notion about something," said Mr. Gubb. "It don't have nothing to do with this will, so I wont say further."

The three lawyers consulted for a minute or two. Then the Judge turned to Gubb again.

"If you knew which of these wills was the last will of Haddon O'Hara, you would tell us?"

"Most certainly sure," said Philo Gubb.

"And did Mr. O'Hara say anything more on the occasion when you signed the will?" asked the Judge.

"He said 'Thank you,'" said Mr. Gubb. "He said 'Thank you, *Sherlock Holmes*. If I ever get a chance to recommend your deteckative ability I shall so do. And I think I'll have a chance.'"

Higgins and Burch laughed, and even the Judge smiled, and they told Mr. Gubb he could go. He went gladly enough because he was working on a

case. It was not much of a case, but Mr. Gubb had not had a case for several weeks and he felt the need of keeping his detective spark alight. It was no more important case than that of a stolen, lost or strayed dog.

An hour or three-quarters of an hour before he had been called to identify his signature to the wills, a gentle tap at Mr. Gubb's door had caused him to look up from the pamphlet—Lesson IV, Rising Sun Detective Bureau Correspondence School of Detecting—he was reading.

"Come on right in," he called, and in answer the door opened and a young woman entered. She was a sweet-faced, modest-appearing girl, and when she pushed back her veil, Mr. Gubb saw she had been weeping, for her eyes were red. Mr. Gubb hastily pulled out his desk chair.



"In the deteckative line, nothing sounds foolish," said Mr. Gubb.

"Take a seat and set down, ma'am," he said politely. "Is there anything in my lines I can be doing for you to-day?"

"Are you Mr. Philo Gubb?" she asked, seating herself.

"Yes'm, paper-hanging and detecting done, P. Gubb," he said.

"It's about a dog, my dog," said the young woman. "He's lost, or stolen, and—"

Emotion choked her words, and Mr. Gubb waited patiently until she could speak.

"I know it sounds foolish to ask a detective to look for a dog," she said with a poor attempt at a smile, "but—"

"In the deteckative line nothing sounds foolish," said Mr. Gubb with politeness.

"But Uncle Haddon told me once that if ever I needed a—a detective I should come to you," the young woman continued. "You knew Uncle Haddon, Mr. Gubb?"

"I had the pleasure of being known to and knowing of him," said Mr. Gubb. "We wasn't what you would specify as chums, but few are."

"He—he was a great joker. He loved to joke. You could never tell when he was joking and when he was serious. Oh, my name is Dolly O'Hara! I am his niece."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, ma'am," said Philo Gubb, and he shook hands gravely.

"He gave me my dog," said Miss O'Hara. "He gave him to me when the dog was just a puppy, and he called him Waffles. He used to joke about my loving the dog more than I loved him. He used to say—"

Miss O'Hara wiped her eyes. For a moment she could not speak.

"He used to say," she continued in a moment, "that I'd never break my heart over a lost uncle, but that if I lost Waffles I'd die of grief. It wasn't so, of course. But I'm heart-broken to have Waffles gone. He is all I'll have to remember Uncle Haddon by. And then—to have him—go!"

"I should take it a pleasure to be employed upon a case to fetch him back," said Mr. Gubb.

"Oh, would you?" cried Miss O'Hara. "I'm so glad! I was afraid a—a real detective might not want to bother with a dog. Of course I'll pay—"

"The remuneration will be minimum on account of the smallness of the crime under the statutes made and provided," said Mr. Gubb.

"But you must let me pay!" urged Miss O'Hara. "One of the things Uncle Haddon said—he seemed serious but I thought he was joking, Mr. Gubb—was about you. 'If you ever lose that dog, Dolly,' he said, 'take some of the Waffles money and hire Detective Gubb. Understand? He's a wonderful detective. He'll leave no stone unturned. He'll find your dog. He'll pry the roof off the dog-house to find a flea, and when he's found the flea he'll hunt up a blonde dog to match it. Remember,' he said, 'if you lose the dog, get Gubb.'"

"I consider the compliment the highest form of flattery," said Mr. Gubb.

"So I want you to try to find Waffles, please, if it isn't beneath you to hunt a dog," said Miss O'Hara. "I feel as if it was almost a command given me by Uncle Haddon. And the money he gave me for Waffles money is all in the bank. He mentioned it when he spoke of you. How much will you charge to find Waffles, Mr. Gubb?"

"I'd ought to have five dollars—" Mr. Gubb began doubtfully.

"Of course!" exclaimed Miss O'Hara. "Why, I expected to pay far more."

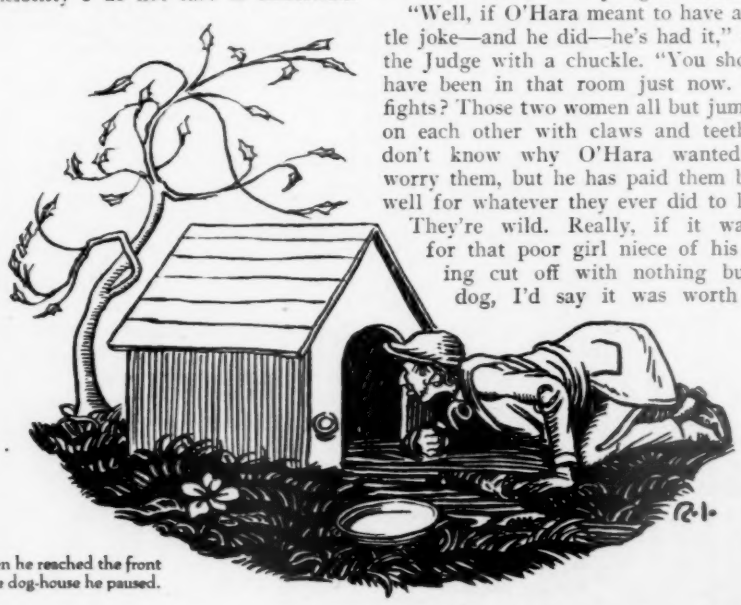
"Well and good," said Mr. Gubb. "And now, how aged was the dog when he was purloined away from you?"

Philo Gubb secured a complete history of the dog. Miss O'Hara had brought, also, two photographs of Waffles in pleasing poses, and when she left, Mr. Gubb accompanied her to the late home of Waffles. It was there he gathered his clues over which he was poring with his microscope when Mr. Higgins came to ask him to step across the hall and to offer him two hundred dollars if he could produce Mustard Bilton. Mr. Gubb went across the hall.

"Gubb," said Judge Mackinnon, when he had introduced the detective to Mrs. Kinsey and Mrs. Doblin, "was Mustard Bilton in this office when you signed your name to these wills?"

"No, sir, he was not present in person," said Mr. Gubb. "He was elsewhere."

"Well, ladies," said the Judge, "it seems to me that until we can find Mustard we cannot proceed. Mr. O'Hara's last will—whichever it is—must be probated. If I took this will to the courthouse, whichever side happened to be uppermost would be probated first and the other side would naturally appear on the record as the latest will. It is a responsibility I do not care to undertake.



When he reached the front of the dog-house he paused.

If you will not agree to compromise and divide the estate—"

"Never!" said both ladies.

"We must find Mustard!" said the Judge. "I shall set the police on his track at once. That is all, Mr. Gubb."

Mr. Gubb went into the hall, but Lawyer Burch followed him.

"Gubb," he said, "just a word! Find Mustard for me. Now, don't talk—find him. Bring Mustard to Judge Mackinnon's office and I'll put two hundred dollars in your hand! That's all!"

Detective Gubb returned to his office and resumed his work on his clues. One by one he submitted the clues to inspection under the microscope. He tried the five processes of the *Sherlock Holmes* inductive method on them. He arranged them in a row on his desk-slide and studied them. By some strange quirk, quite out of keeping with the usual detective-story logic, he could make nothing of them. Even the flea in the bit of dog hair did not point direct to the location of the dog. They were blind clues. Mr. Gubb swept them into an empty envelope, sealed the envelope, put on his hat and went out.

On the stair he met Judge Mackinnon.

"Well, if O'Hara meant to have a little joke—and he did—he's had it," said the Judge with a chuckle. "You should have been in that room just now. Cat fights? Those two women all but jumped on each other with claws and teeth. I don't know why O'Hara wanted to worry them, but he has paid them back well for whatever they ever did to him. They're wild. Really, if it wasn't for that poor girl niece of his being cut off with nothing but a dog, I'd say it was worth all O'Hara's property to see two such cantankerous old busy-bodies having the cat-fits."

"And the dog has disappeared away, too," said Mr. Gubb. "I am proceeding on my way at the present time to help discover where the dog is. I have been engaged in a deteckative capacity by Miss O'Hara for that purpose."

"Hope you find the poor child's pet," said the Judge as he turned off in the opposite direction.

Mr. Gubb proceeded to the late home of Haddon O'Hara. Like the homes of many bookish men, the property had not been well kept. The picket fence needed paint; and the gate, while workable,

hung by the upper hinge only. Grass grew between the bricks of the walk that led around the house, and the house itself needed paint as badly as the fence. Detective Gubb followed the brick walk to the back of the house. He was already familiar with the premises.

The dog-house — the only recently painted structure in the neighborhood— stood opposite the kitchen door. It was perhaps three feet in height and four feet long, with a pointed roof. As a door it had an open arch, and at one side of this was a staple to which a chain could be attached. The grass in front of the dog-house was worn away, leaving the soil packed hard. The detective, arriving at the dog-house, walked around it, gazing at it closely.

The inductive method had failed—as it always failed for Mr. Gubb—and he meant now to try following a clue in person, if he could find a clue to follow. But to no corner or projection of the dog-house did a scrap of cloth cling, as scraps of cloth should cling for the benefit of detectives. Mr. Gubb dropped to his hands and knees and crept around the dog-house, seeking a clue hidden in the grass. When he reached the front of the dog-house he paused.

"Ye look that like a dog I was thinkin' ye'd howl for a bone," said Mrs. Mullarky suddenly from the kitchen door. Mr. Gubb turned and eyed her with disapproval.

"The operations of detecting are strange to the lay mind," he said haughtily. "Those not understanding them should be seen and not heard."

"An' hear the man!" cried Mrs. Mullarky. "Does a dog-house drive all of ye crazy? T' see a human bein' crawlin' around on his four legs an' callin' it detectin' where a dog is that aint there! 'Tw'u'd have been better for Mr. O'Hara t' have tould you t' crawl in an' lay in the dog-house than t' insoolt Miss Dolly by tellin' her to. Go awn, if ye wish! Crawl inside of ut!"

"I'm going to do so," said Mr. Gubb, and he did.

Inside, or as far inside as he could get, Mr. Gubb struck a match and examined the floor of the house. There was straw on it, but nothing even remotely suggesting a clue. No dog-thief had left a glove there. Mr. Gubb began to back out, and as he backed his head touched something softer than a pine board. He craned his long neck and looked upward. Tacked to the inside of the roof of the house was a long envelope. Mr. Gubb put up his hand and pulled it loose. Then he backed into the daylight. He sat on the bare spot before the dog-house and examined the envelope.

The envelope was sealed, but on the face of it was written:

To be delivered to Judge Mackinnon, after Waffles has been returned to his house and home. Waffles will be found in the old cattle-shed on the Illinois side of the river, north from the turnpike at the far end of the bridge. H. O'H.

It was a clue! Without stopping to silence the scornful laughter of Mrs. Mullarky, Philo Gubb jumped to his feet and made for the Iowa side of the long bridge as rapidly as his long legs could carry him. He reached the old cattle-shed and found Mustard Bilton seated at the door, smoking a cob pipe in lazy comfort.

"Come for the dog?" asked Mustard carelessly. "Sort of thought you'd come for him about now. Been expectin' you the last couple o' days."

"Expecting me?" said Philo Gubb. "I've been doing deteckative work on this case—"

"Yes, Had' O'Hara reckoned you'd detect around awhile before you got track of me," said Mustard without emotion. "He says, when I'd signed that there will for him, 'Day or so after I kick the bucket, Mustard, you go up and steal Waffles,' he says, 'and fetch him over to the cattle-shed on the Illinoy side,' he says, 'and keep him there until Gubb comes for him. Take a day or so, maybe,' he says, 'for Dolly to remember I told her to get Gubb, and take Gubb a day or two to scrooge round before he hits on the clue I've fixed up to point him to you, but he'll come. He's a wonder, Gubb is,' says O'Hara, 'and no mistake. If a feller was to steal a sardine out of a can,' he says, 'bet you Gubb would want to see what was inside the

empty can before he'd start out to find the feller. You just sit quiet an' wait till Gubb snoops round enough,' he says, 'and he'll come.' "

"You have possession of the Waffles dog at the present time?" asked Detective Gubb.

"In yonder," said Mustard, pointing over his shoulder. "Say, what's the joke O'Hara was cookin' up, anyway?"

"You accompany yourself with me to the office of Judge Mackinnon," said Mr. Gubb, "and you'll discover it out for yourself and I'll remunerate you to twenty dollars also. Fetch the dog."

Mr. Gubb, quite properly, left Mustard and Waffles in his own office while he visited Mr. Higgins and Mr. Burch, collecting two hundred dollars from each. Then he turned Mr. Mustard Bilton over to them.

"You signed those wills of O'Hara's," said Mr. Burch when all had gathered in Judge Mackinnon's office. "Do you know which you signed last?"

"Sure, I do," said Mustard.

Mr. Burch handed him the double will.

"Which did you sign last?" asked Mr. Burch energetically.

Mustard took the document and looked at it. The Kinsey side was toward him.

"It wasn't this one," he said positively.

"Ah, ha!" cried Lawyer Higgins, turning the paper over. "Then it was this one you signed last!"

"No," said Mustard, glancing at the Doblin side of the paper. "I signed this'n the same time as I signed the other side of it. I signed both these the first day of the month. The one I signed last I signed on the second of the month."

"Ah, yes!" said Judge Mackinnon, looking at a document he had taken from the envelope Philo Gubb had handed him. "You mean this one. Hum. 'Last will and testament — and all else with which I may die possessed—to my niece Dorothy O'Hara—and hope she can take a joke—Haddon O'Hara.' You mean this one, Mr. Bilton?"

"Yep," said Mustard, looking at the document that gave to Dolly O'Hara every jot and tittle of Haddon O'Hara's property. "That's the one. That's the one I signed last. Me and old Sam Fliggis signed her—same day O'Hara hired me to steal the dog. Well, I guess I'll be takin' the dog back home. So 'long, gents. Old Had' was bound to have his joke, wasn't he?"

"Mr. Gubb," said Judge Mackinnon suddenly, "would you be betraying a professional secret if you told us where you found this document?"

"In the pursuit of following my deteckative profession," said Detective Gubb, "according to Lesson Six, page Thirty-two."

ANOTHER Philo Gubb story is coming in the December Red Book Magazine. They're just about the best entertainment that's being written these days. Get the habit of reading them from month to month.



The Last Dinner

By Frances Peck Smith

ILLUSTRATED BY EDMUND FREDERICK

IT was over! Their last dinner together.

It had been a gay affair. Only such people as could help make it a gay affair had been invited: tried and true friends, all of them—yet, not one of those present dreaming of its being the *last* dinner.

Now it was over, and they had gone. In the quaint, charming dining-room, the last of the candles winked wearily. One, spluttering in a final frenzy of frantic endeavor, attracted the attention of the man, and he walked slowly around, blowing out the tiny lights. The woman, sitting on the arm of the big fireside chair in the living-room, watched him with indifferent eyes. So, she thought, had the lights in her life been extinguished—one by one. He caught her look and nodded.

"Much the same," he said, drily, exploiting again that faculty of his for reading her thoughts. "But you see, Mary, not all of these candles have burned clear to the end. In fact, most of them will bear another lighting."

Mrs. Bannering shrugged her shoulders.

"Dinner went off well," he remarked after a moment of silence. Something like interest flashed into her eyes.

"Yes," she replied, "everybody did seem to have a good time. But just can't you imagine—" She paused, her mobile lips curving whimsically. He nodded.

"—imagine their faces had one of us remarked: 'The next time you come to see us, it will be one or the other of us. Mrs. Bannering at 816 Watson Avenue, or Mr. Bannering at the Athletic Club. You see, we have decided to separate.' Yes, I can imagine."

His wife laughed, yawned and rose. "I only hope it doesn't get into the papers," she remarked. "I do hate the thought of scandal. Because we're really not at all scandalous. We're just sensible."

"Incompatible," Bannering suggested, good-naturedly. "Good-night, Mary. Rather—good-by! I think I'll go to the club now. I'm dated for a game of billiards. My things are packed. I can send for them in the morning. There's really no use of my coming back again."

"Quite true," Mrs. Bannering assented. "Good-by, Don. You've been

awfully decent about settlements. I got the papers yesterday. It's understood, of course, that at any time either of us wants a divorce, the other will not object?"

"Yes. Such a thing can't be put in writing, however."

"I understand." She held out her hand. He clasped it firmly for a moment, then opened the door quietly and bowed her out. When the door of her bedroom had closed, he went to his own room, changed to a business suit and left the house.

MARY BANNERING slipped quickly into lacy nightgown and silken negligee, and lay down on the couch near the fire. The hour was not late and she was far from being sleepy. Besides, she wanted to think things over and out, once and for all.

All the real crises of her life had occurred in the late summer, she reflected, as she lay relaxed and comfortable, her gray eyes fixed on the glowing coals. She had met Don, a promising young lawyer, at a house party. The following year, at about the same time, she had married him.

"Six years ago," she murmured, counting on her fingers. The firelight fell on the narrow band that was her wedding ring. She drew it off and held it enclosed in her hand.

"When I get up," she thought, "I'll put it some place. I wouldn't want to throw it away. But I don't want to wear it any more. Let me see—what ring can I wear on that finger? I'd feel so lost without something. My matrix, I guess." And, dismissing this subject, she took up her line of thought where she had left off:

A year of tempestuous happiness had followed their marriage. Don had known, she reflected a little wistfully, how to make the woman who was his wife happy. At the end of the year the baby had come.

The baby!

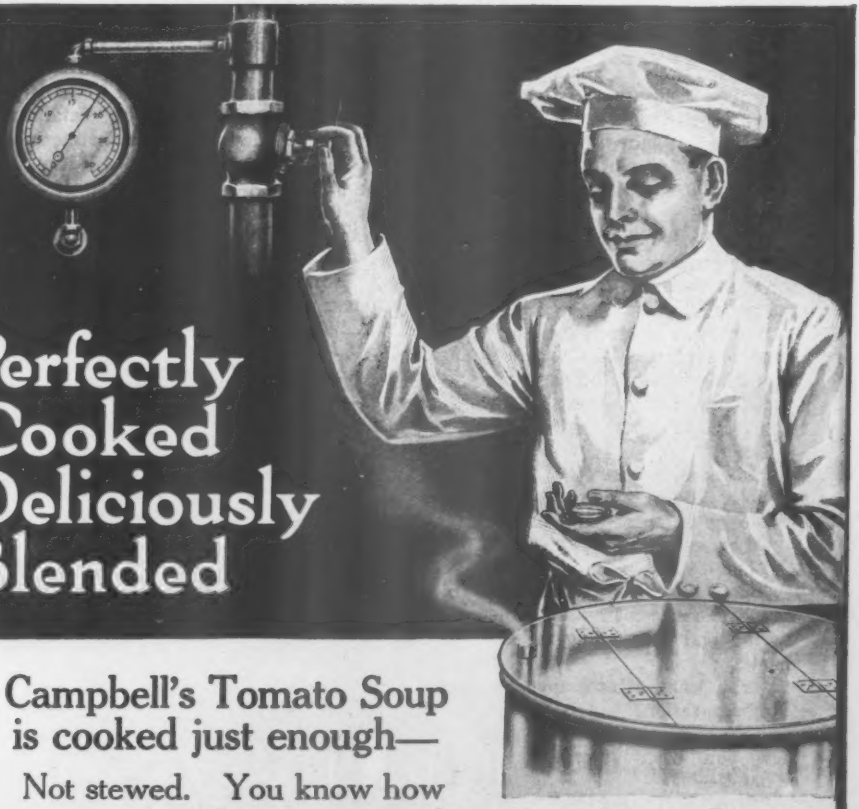
THE old ache of longing caught at her heart and shook it cruelly. Her little, little baby! How she had longed and planned for it, and how she had loved it when it had come! She recalled her absorption and her impatience with everything that had interfered with that absorption. Surely in all the wide world no child had ever been more mothered or blessed with care, clothes and tenderness.

But Death had had no care for all of this. The children of the poor, the unwilling, the careless, had been spared to their mothers, while her baby had been swept from her arms, leaving them empty with an emptiness that nothing could fill.

Don had done his best. In his blundering man's way he had tried to make up for her loss—a loss, she thought bitterly, that he had never understood. Being only a man and a father, how could he? What had he known about the baby, anyway? In the warm, scented haven which was the nursery, where she had brooded over her young, he had been but little more than a stranger. His occasional paternal suggestions had been refused as superfluous and incompetent. And he, engrossed in business, had been, apparently, content to remain an outsider.

SO, because she felt that he couldn't know, couldn't understand, she had resented his sympathy, much as she might have resented a stranger's curiosity. At last—such things come about gradually—the baby's name had become a subject barred between them. And so they had grown apart, the baby's grave becoming, apparently, the grave of a love that, in the beginning, had borne all fair promise of perfect development.

Don hadn't cared much, she reflected. If so, how could he have taken up with his other interests so soon again? She had fought the return to the world. It had to be, of course. Life had to be lived. So she had gone back to it, suffering with an intensity that alarmed her. And because she did suffer so, she would have no one know it. No alien sympathies should touch her sorrow. She would be alone with her dead. Together, she and her husband had faced their world. How, then, should the world surmise that within the four walls of their home they were little more than casual friends?



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TWO months before, during one of their rare evenings together, the subject of separation had come up, suggested by the wife.

"We're not suited," Mary Bannering had said thoughtfully. "We're awfully, awfully different, Don, and we might as well face the fact."

"Queer, too," Bannering had answered genially, "how we fooled ourselves at the start. Romance and passion are great blinders."

"You were so good looking," she had gone on, pleasantly, "and had such a way with you. And I was young and impressionable. Now, were we to choose, I suspect our choice would be entirely different."

"Is there anyone else, Mary?"

"No, Don. There couldn't be—while we're living together."

"There might, otherwise?"

"I don't know."

There had followed an impressive silence. Finally Bannering had said, rising rather heavily:

"You want divorce then? Not separation."

"No. Separation — unless you wish divorce. That is—"

"Until you meet the ideal of your dreams!"

"Or until you do."

At which, Bannering stared at her with rather awful eyes, she had thought. And lines had sprung into his lean cheeks and about his mouth. But, after a minute, he had shrugged his shoulders and had proceeded to his self-imposed nightly task of winding the old clock that had been his grandfather's.

How he loved that old clock! She would send it to him. There was a good deal of sentiment in Don—for some things.

The day after their talk he had gone directly to work arranging details for their separation. It was his manner never to delay anything that must, ultimately, be attended to. Yesterday the last formalities had been concluded. Now—he was gone. She had heard the door close. She was free.

How quiet the house seemed. That queer quiet of a house without a man in it. She wondered if she would be afraid,



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but put the thought from her impatiently.

"I'll just go around and make sure everything's locked up," she said, and sat up. Her eyes fell on the picture of the baby in its ivory frame on her dressing table. Her face quivered.

"Baby!" she murmured hungrily.

But as she looked there seemed to be no laughter in the eyes. The little open mouth had lost its smile. With a fascination that was little short of terror, Mary Bannering stared.

"Why?" she whispered at last through dry lips. "Why—don't you love your mother, Baby? Baby!"

But the eyes and the lips were mirthless, old! Mrs. Bannering rose abruptly and turned away.

"I am unstrung," she muttered; "I must get to bed. To imagine such a thing!" She went swiftly from the room on her tour of window inspection.

SHE shuddered as she switched on the light in Bannering's room. How bare it looked! To-morrow she must have it changed entirely. There must be no ghosts of her past to haunt her.

Having found everything secure on the second floor, she went downstairs. In the lower hall she halted. Something was strange! The darkness she stood in was not total darkness as it should have been. And this was because light from the library was sifting through the heavy silken portières that separated that room from the hall.

Mrs. Bannering was not a brave woman, but she feared suspense more than any other one thing. So, after waiting for a moment to collect her wits, she advanced noiselessly and peered into the softly lighted library. At what she saw her hand went to her heart.

On the hearth rug was a little wicker basket filled with toys—frayed little woolly lambs, one-eared cats and tailless dogs, crocheted rattles, ivory teething rings. All had belonged to Baby. Each had its little story. And the mother had kept them hidden in a place she thought was known to no one but herself.

Kneeling beside the basket was Donald Bannering. Or *could* that be Don? Could that tense, haggard face belong to easy-going, good-natured, indifferent Don? And if so, what *was* he doing?

He was taking the toys—stealing his baby's toys! Picking them out, one by one, with shaking fingers, and placing them carefully in a small valise that stood open by his side.

Mary Bannering shivered as if a cold wind had blown over her, while she gazed at that pathetic figure. Don to care—like that! She must go away quietly—not to startle him! But at the thought a panic overtook her. No. His face as she was seeing it then, would haunt her forever. She would never be able to put the pathos of that picture from her mind. She must see him smile again—

SHE began to hum a little, tremulously, to warn him. Then she put out her hand and drew back the curtain, endeavoring to enter casually.

Bannering rose as she came into the room. His manner betrayed neither embarrassment nor apology. He looked at her for a moment without speaking, then said quietly:

"I thought you were in bed, Mary."

"I am going presently. Don, why did you come back?"

He made a little gesture toward the toys. "For these. I had to have them. And I wouldn't ask you. You have always, somehow, resented so, my love for—Baby."

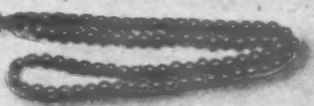
" 'Resented!' " the woman echoed stupidly. "Resented! Why—how can you say such a thing!"

Bannering drew his hand wearily across his forehead.

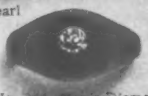
"Yes," he said. "Or something very like it. I can't explain. I've never understood. I laid awake nights, when she was living, trying to understand. I simply couldn't make out your attitude toward me. From the time of her birth you were a changed woman—as regards our relations. I became merely a necessary and tiresome adjunct—useful for paying bills and acting as a general buffer between you and the worries of the world. You took your heart from my keeping and shut it up with the baby, and the new, hard woman who was you, in the nursery, with never a thought for



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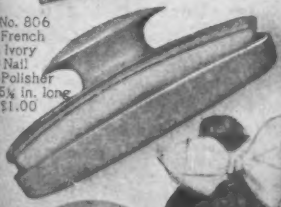
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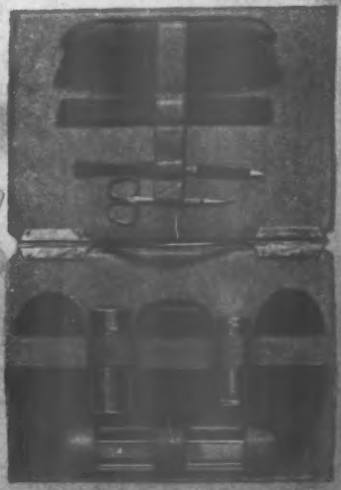
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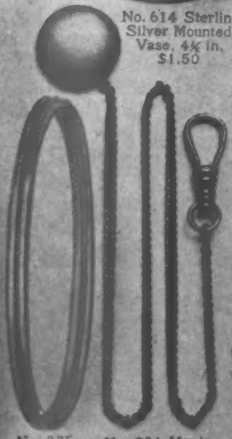


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me with my loneliness and the memories of what had been, in the other part of the house. You,"—his voice was harsh with emotion—"you never thought of her as *our* baby. Only as *your* baby. *Yours!* And yet I was as much responsible for her being as you!

"And when she died—oh, look at me and think me a brute if you want to: I'm going to say what I've got to say now, and then close the subject forever—when she died, and I not only wanted to help you but *needed* you to help me, you absolutely withdrew yourself from me. I suppose you had your reasons—but I've never been able to figure them out. Probably you simply ceased to care. Well, I can't understand that, either. Not when I think of what has been, between us.

"What I want you to know before I leave is this: *She* loved me. You shut me out—or tried to—but Baby *knew*. She knew, Mary. Look here!"

He held out his hand. Mary noted dully that the thin gold ring he had always worn on his little finger was curiously marred and dented. He dropped his hand.

"She liked to bite on that," he said simply, "—when she was teething. If you'd been around you wouldn't have let her. You'd have said it wasn't sanitary. Well—you weren't around when we had our lovings—and I never look at that ring but I feel her little wet, warm mouth. She knew I was her daddy, and she loved me, Mary!"

Shaking from head to foot, Mary Bannering put out her hand and touched the ring. Her face was drawn and white, and she had bitten her lips, cruelly. Bannering caught his breath and took her by the arm. He led her to a chair.

"Sit down," he said curtly. "I'll be gone in a minute. There was no need for me to talk as I have. But when I saw you—I lost my head. You probably don't want me to take these things but I'm going to. I have to have them. Not all—only a few. The ones we played with."

"Don—!" She caught at his sleeve. He turned away.

"Don't get upset, Mary. I'm sorry you happened in. And don't have hysterics! You'll feel better to-morrow—when the sun is shining."

"Don!"

She sobbed the word. He turned reluctantly toward her, then drew back, startled at the radiance of her face.

"O, *Don!*"

Bannering caught her by the elbows and pulled her roughly to her feet. In his eyes was a burning, passionate questioning.

"Mary," he said huskily. "Don't—don't look like that unless you mean it. Please don't hurt me any more! I—"

"Oh—" She drew back a little, her wet eyes searching his face. "Oh—hurt you! Do you care, Don? Have I the *power* to hurt you? Why, dear, I didn't know you *cared!*"

With a broken word he drew her swiftly to him, into the arms that had ached so long to hold her. And she clung to him, breathless, happy, conscious of only one thing, and that, that home was *here*.

Suddenly something tinkled on the hearth-stones.

"Your wedding ring," Bannering said in some surprise, as, still holding her in the circle of one arm, he bent to pick it up. "I didn't know it was loose, honey?"

She flushed.

"It isn't," she said. "I took it off. Please put it back for keeps, sir."

An hour later, in their room, for two years hers alone, she picked up the baby's picture. They stood looking at it silently.

"Such a little smile!" Bannering said fondly, after a moment had passed. Mrs. Bannering murmured:

"Such a happy little smile—now!"

Downstairs the old clock struck the hour. It was morning.

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THE DECEMBER ISSUE OF

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

ON THE NEWS-STANDS NOVEMBER 23rd

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Short Stories by

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And the Three Big Novels of the Day

"EMPTY POCKETS"
by Rupert Hughes

"HEPSEY BURKE"
by Frank N. Westcott

"GOD'S COUNTRY—AND THE WOMAN"
by James Oliver Curwood



One of Walter Tittle's illustrations for "Broken Glass," by Meredith Nicholson, in the December Red Book Magazine.

HEPSEY BURKE—a new "David Harum"

Continued from page 28 of this issue

"So you are the young man who is to take charge of the church. It is always difficult for a city-bred man to adjust himself to the needs and manners of a country parish. Very difficult, Mr. Maxwell—very difficult."

Maxwell smiled as he replied:

"Yes, but that is a fault which time will remedy."

"Doubtless. Time has a way of remedying most things. But in the meantime—in the meantime, lack of tact, self-assertiveness, indiscretion, on the part of a clergyman may do much harm—much harm!"

Maxwell colored slightly as he laughed and replied:

"I should imagine that you have had rather a 'mean time,' from the way you speak. Your impressions of the clergy seem to be painful."

"Well," the lawyer continued sententiously, "we have had all sorts and conditions of men, as the Prayer Book says; and the result has not *always* been satisfactory—*not* always satisfactory. But I was not consulted."

To this, Maxwell, who was somewhat nettled, replied:

"I suppose that in any case the responsibility for the success of a parish must be somewhat divided between the parson and the people. I am sure I may count on your assistance."

"Oh yes; oh yes; of course. I shall be very glad to advise you in any way I can. Prevention is better than cure: don't hesitate to come to me for suggestions. You will doubtless be anxious to follow in the good old ways, and avoid extremes. I am a firm believer in expediency. Though I was not consulted in the present appointment, I may say that what we need is a man of moderate views who can adjust himself to circumstances. Tact, that is the great thing in life. I am a firm believer in tact. Our resources are limited; and a clergyman should be a self-denying man of God, contented with plain living and high thinking. No man can succeed in a country parish who seeks the loaves and fishes of the worldling. Durford is not a metropolis; we do not emulate city ways."

"No, I should imagine not," Maxwell answered.

The parson gathered that the Senior Warden felt slighted that he had not been asked by the Bishop to name his appointee; and that if he had bethought himself to sprinkle a little hay-seed on his clothing, his reception might have been more cordial.

AT this point the door opened and a woman, hovering somewhere between twenty-five and forty, dressed in rather youthful and pronounced attire, entered, and seeing Donald exclaimed:

"Oh, Papa, I did not know that you were busy with a client. Do excuse me."

Then, observing the clerical attire of the "client," she came forward, and extending her hand to Donald exclaimed with a coy, insinuating smile:

"I am sure that you must be Mr. Maxwell. I am so glad to see you. I hope I am not interrupting professional confidences."

"Not in the least," Donald replied, as he placed a chair for her. "I am very glad to have the pleasure of meeting you, Miss Bascom."

"I heard last night that you had arrived, Mr. Maxwell; and I am sure that it is very good of you to come and see Papa so soon. I hope to see you at our house before long. You know that we are in the habit of seeing a good deal of the rector, because—you will excuse my frankness — because there are so few people of culture and refinement in this town to make it pleasant for him."

"I am sure that you are very kind," Donald replied. Miss Bascom had adjusted her tortoise-shell lorgnette, and was surveying Donald from head to foot.

"Is your wife with you?" she inquired, as one who would say: "Tell me no lies!"



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"No, I am not married."

At once she was one radiant smile of welcome:

"Papa, we must do all we can to make Mr. Maxwell feel at home at Willow Bluff—so that he will not get lonesome and desert us," she added genially.

"You're very kind."

"You must come and dine with us very soon and see our place for yourself. You are staying with Mrs. Burke, I understand."

"Yes."

"How does she impress you?"

"I hardly know her well enough to form any definite opinion of her, though she has been kindness itself to me."

"Yes, she has a sharp tongue, but a kind heart; and she does a great deal of good in the village; but, poor soul! she has no sense of humor—none whatever. Then of course she is not in society, you know. You will find, Mr. Maxwell, that social lines are very carefully drawn in this town; there are so many grades, and one has to be careful, you know."

"Is it so! How many people are there in the town?"

"Possibly eight or nine hundred."

"And how many of them are 'in society?' "

"Oh, I should imagine not more than twenty or thirty."

"They must be very select."

"Oh, we are; quite so."

"Don't you ever get tired of seeing the same twenty or thirty all the time? I'm afraid I am sufficiently vulgar to like a change, once in a while—somebody real common, you know."

Miss Bascom raised her lorgnette in pained surprise and gazed at Donald curiously; then she sighed and tapping her fingers with her glasses replied:

"But one has to consider the social responsibilities of one's position, you know. Many of the village people are well enough in their way, really quite amusing as individuals; but one cannot alter social distinctions."

"I see," replied Donald, non-committally.

VIRGINIA was beginning to think that the new rector was rather dull in his perceptions, rather *gauche,* but, deciding to take a charitable view, she held out her hand with a beaming smile as she said:

"Remember, you are to make Willow Bluff one of your homes. We shall always be charmed to see you."

When, after their respective shoppings were completed, Maxwell rejoined Mrs. Burke, and they had started on a brisk trot towards home, she remarked:

"So you have had a visit with the Senior Warden."

"Yes, and with Miss Bascom. She came into the office while I was there."

"Hm! Well! She's one of your flock!"

"Would you call Miss Bascom one of my lambs?" asked Donald mischievously.

"Oh, that depends on where you draw the line. Don't you think she's handsome?"

"I can hardly say. What do you think about it?"

"Oh, I don't know. When she's well dressed she has a sort of style about her; but isn't it merciful that we none of us know how we really do look. If we did, we wouldn't risk bein' alone with ourselves five minutes without a gun."

"Is that one for Miss Bascom?"

"No, I ought not to say a word against Virginia Bascom. She's a good sort accordin' to her lights; and then too, she is a disconnection of mine by marriage—once removed."

"How do you calculate that relationship?"

"Oh, her mother's brother married my sister. She suspected that he was guilty of incompatibility—and she proved it, and got a divorce. If that don't make a disconnection of Ginty Bascom, then I don't know what does. Virginia was born in Boston, though she was brought up here. It must be terrible to be born in Boston, and have to live up to it, when you spend your whole life in a place like Durford. But Ginty does her very best, though occasionally she forgets."

"You can hardly blame her for that. Memory is tricky, and Boston and Durford are about as unlike as two places well could be."

"Oh, no; I don't blame her. Once she formed a club for woman's suffrage. She set out to 'form my mind'—as if my mind wasn't pretty thoroughly formed at



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this time of day—and get me to protest against the tyranny of the male sex. I didn't see that the male sex was troublin' her much; but I signed a petition she got up to send to the Governor or somebody, asking for the right to vote. There was an opposition society that didn't want the ballot, and they got up another petition."

"And you signed that too, I expect," laughed Donald.

"Sure thing, I did. I'm not narrow-minded, and I like to be obliging. Then she tried what she called slummin', which, as near as I can see, means walkin' in where you aint wanted, because people are poorer than you are, and leavin' little tracts that nobody reads, and currant jelly that nobody eats, and clothes that nobody can wear. But an Irishman shied a cabbage at her head while she was tryin' to convince him that the bath-tub wasn't really a coal bin, and that his mental attitude was hind-side before.

"Then she got to be a Theosophist, and used to sit in her room upstairs projecting her astral body out of the window into the back yard, and pulling it in again like a ball on a rubber string—just for practice, you know. But that attack didn't last long."

"She seems to be a very versatile young woman; but she doesn't stick to one thing very long."

"A rolling stone gathers no moss, you know," Mrs. Burke replied. "That's one of the advantages of bein' a rolling stone. It must be awful to get mossy; and there isn't any moss on Virginia Bascom, whatever faults she may have—not a moss."

For a moment Mrs. Burke was silent, and then she began:

"Once Virginia got to climbin' her family tree, to find out where her ancestors came from. She thought that possibly they might be noblemen. But I guess there wasn't very much doin' up the tree until she got down to New York, and paid a man to tell her. She brought back an illuminated coat of arms with a lion rampantin' on top; but she was the same old Virginia still. What do I care about my ancestors! It doesn't make no difference to me. I'm just myself anyway, no matter how you figure; and I'm a lot more worried about where I'm goin' to, than where I came from. Virginia's got a book called 'Who's Who,' that she's always studying. But the only thing that matters, it seems to me, is Who's What."

"I wonder she hasn't married," remarked Donald, innocently.

"Ah, that's the trouble. She's like a thousand others without no special occupation in life. She's wastin' a lot of bottled up interest and sympathy on foolish things. If she'd married and had seven babies, they would have seen to it that she didn't make a fool of herself. However, it isn't her fault. She's volunteered to act as Deaconess to every unmarried parson we've had; and it's a miracle of wonders one of 'em didn't succumb; parsons are such—oh, do excuse me! I mean so injudicious on the subject of matrimony."

"But, Mrs. Burke, don't you think a clergyman ought to be a married man?"

"Oh yes; old bachelors aren't the nicest thing the Lord ever made. Most of 'em are mighty selfish critters, take 'em as they run; and a man that's never had a real great love in his life doesn't know what life is."

"That's quite true," Donald responded, with such warmth that Mrs. Burke glanced at him suspiciously, and changed her tune, as she continued:

"Seems to me a parson, or any other man, is very foolish to marry before he can support a wife comfortably, and lay by somethin' for a rainy day, though. The last rector had five babies and seventeen cents to feed 'em with. Yes, there were little olive branches on all four sides of the table, and under the table too. The Whittimores seemed to have their quiver full of 'em, as the psalmist says. Mrs. Whittimore used to say to me, 'The Lord will provide,'—just to keep her courage up, poor thing! Well, I suppose the Lord did provide; but I had to do a lot of hustlin', just the same. No sir, if a parson marries, he better find a woman who has outgrown her short skirts. Young things dyin' to be martyrs with a good lookin' young parson, are a drug in the market. Better go slow." And Hepsey looked up at him significantly.



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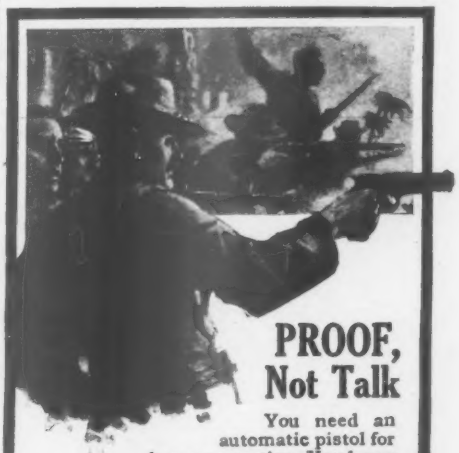
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"Then you think it would be inadvisable to propose to Miss Virginia immediately, do you?" Donald asked, as if humbly seeking guidance.

"Well, there doesn't seem to be any immediate hurry about it. Now if you'll open the gate to Thunder Cliff, I'll be much obliged to you. If I don't get my mind on something less romantic than Virginia, we shall have to dine off airy fancies—and that wont suit Nickey, for one."

CHAPTER IV

Milking

BETTY, my love:

I can imagine that just about this time you have finished your dinner, and are enjoying your after-dinner coffee in the library with your father. I would give all that I possess, though heaven knows that is mighty little, to be with you and get you to talk to me, and let me tell you all that has happened since I left you. But instead of that I am alone in my room with your picture on the table while I write.

To-day I have almost completed my first round of parish visits, and the experience has been a revelation to me of the mixture of pathetic narrowness, hardship, and self-denial of the people up here in the mountains. One minute I am all out of patience with their stupidity, and the next I am touched to the heart by their patience with unendurable conditions, and their generosity and kindness to each other. I hope to be able to adjust my mental equilibrium to the situation before long and to learn to understand them better; I find that a country parson must be a man of many accomplishments, and that I have to learn my profession all over again. Yesterday I called on a poor shriveled old woman who, I was told, was in trouble. When I asked her what I could do for her, she brightened up and informed me that her apple trees were full of worms! So there was nothing for it but to take off my coat and vest, roll up my sleeves, and burn out the worms. I must have destroyed about a bushel, more or less. It took most of the afternoon; but she was pleased, and appeared in church this morning for the first time in six years.

I have learned a lot about the rotation of crops, helped to dig a well, and attended a barn dance. I have eaten pickles by the score at teas given in my honor, rather than offend the hostess; and have had horrible nights in consequence. Every morning Nickey and I take the milk down to the creamery before breakfast. I am so tanned that you would hardly recognize me; and I must confess with shame that I am never more happy than when I am able to put on my soiled working clothes and do manual labor on the farm. I suppose it is the contrast to my former life, and the fact that it takes my thoughts away from the longing for you.

The men up here seem to think I know mighty little. It's very humiliating! But since they discovered that I am neither "'ristocratic" nor "pious," they seem to be friendly enough. I often find myself wondering if much of the work in the seminary wasn't a sheer waste of time, when I am brought up against the practical, commonplace, every-day life of these people. My friend Mrs. Burke has a fund of common sense and worldly wisdom which is worth more than any Ph.D. or S.T.D. represents, to help a man to meet the hard facts of life successfully; and she has been very nice and considerate in making suggestions to me—always wrapped up in a humor all her own. I have found it practically impossible to get into touch with the farmers of the neighborhood without becoming more or less of a farmer myself, and learning by actual experience what the life is like. One man was so openly supercilious when he found out that I did not know how to milk, that Mrs. Burke, who is nothing if not practical, offered to show me.

I have acquired a suit of overalls, and a wide-brimmed straw hat; and so, attiring myself in the most orthodox fashion, Mrs. Burke and I went to the shed yesterday where Louise, the Jersey cow, abides, and I took my first lesson in milking. Mrs. Burke carefully explained to me the *modus operandi* I was to pursue; and so, taking the tin pail between my knees, I seated myself on the three



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legged stool by the side of Louise, and timidly began operations. She seemed to know by some bovine instinct that I was a tenderfoot; and although I followed Mrs. Burke's instructions to the letter, no milk put in its appearance. Mrs. Burke was highly amused at my perplexity. Finally she remarked:

"You've got to introduce yourself, and get Louise's confidence before she'll give down. She thinks that you are too familiar on a short acquaintance. Now talk to her a bit, and be friendly."

This was somewhat of a poser, as Louise and I really have not much in common, and I was at a loss where to begin. But something had to be done, and so I made a venture and remarked:

"Louise, the wind is in the south; and if it doesn't change, we shall certainly have rain within three days."

This did not seem to have the desired effect. In fact she ignored my remark in the most contemptuous fashion. Then Mrs. Burke suggested:

"Get up, and come round where she can see you. No lady wants to be talked to by a gentleman that's out of sight."

So I got up and went around by her head, fed her some clover, patted her on the neck, rubbed her nose, and began a little mild, persuasive appeal:

"Louise, I am really a man of irreproachable character. I am a son of the Revolution; I held three scholarships in Harvard; and I graduated second in my class at the General Sem. Furthermore, I'm not at all accustomed to being snubbed by ladies. Can't you make up your mind to be obliging?"

Louise sniffed at me inquiringly, gazing at me with large-eyed curiosity. Then as if in token that she had come to a favorable conclusion, she ran out her tongue and licked my hand. When I resumed operations, the milk poured into the pail, and Mrs. Burke was just congratulating me on my complete success, when, by some accident the stool slipped, and I fell over backwards, and the whole contents of the pail was poured on the ground. My! but wasn't I disgusted? I thought Mrs. Burke would never stop laughing at me; but she was good enough not to allude to the loss of the milk!

Some day when we are married, and you come up here, I will take you out and introduce you to Louise, and she will fall in love with you on the spot.

My most difficult task is my Senior Warden—and it looks as if he *would not* make friends, do what I will to "qualify" according to his own expressed notions of what a country parson should be. But I rather suspect that he likes to keep the scepter in his own hands, while the clergy do his bidding. But that wont do for me.

So you see the life up here is interesting from its very novelty, though I do get horribly lonesome, sometimes. If I had not pledged myself to the Bishop to stay and work the parish together into something like an organization, I am afraid I should be tempted to cut and run—back to you, sweetheart.

AND there was a post script:

"I've not said half enough of how much Mrs. Burke's wisdom has taught and helped me. She is a shrewd observer of human motives, and I expect she has had a struggle to keep the sweetness of her nature at the top. She is, naturally, a capable, dominating character; and often I watch how she forces herself to let persuasiveness take precedence of combativeness. Her acquired philosophy, as applied to herself and others, is summed up in a saying she let drop the other day, modified to suit her needs: 'More flies are caught with molasses than with vinegar — but keep some vinegar by you!' *Verb. Sap.*'"

CHAPTER V

The Miniature

IT happened that the Reverend Donald Maxwell committed a careless indiscretion. When he went to his room to prepare for supper, he found that he had left the miniature of a certain young lady on the mantelpiece, having forgotten to return it to its hiding-place the night before. He quickly placed it in its covering and locked it up in his desk, but not without many misgivings at the thought that Mrs. Burke had probably discovered it when she put his room in order.

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He was quite right in his surmise, for just as she was about to leave the room she had caught sight of the picture, and, after examining it carefully, she had exclaimed to herself:

"Hm! Hm! So that's the young woman, is it? In a gilded frame set with real glass rubies and turquoises. I guessed those letters couldn't come from his mother. She wouldn't write to him every blessed day; she'd take a day off now and then, just to rest up a bit. Well, well, well! So this is what you've been dreaming about; and a mighty good thing too—only the sooner it's known the better. But I suppose I'll have to wait for his reverence to inform me officially, and then I'll have to look mighty surprised! She's got a good face, anyway; but he ought to wait awhile. Poor soul! she'd just die of loneliness up here. Well, I suppose it'll be my business to look after her, and I reckon I'd best take time by the fetlock, and get the rectory in order. It isn't fit for rats to live in now."

Mrs. Burke's discovery haunted her all day long, and absorbed her thoughts when she went to bed. If Maxwell was really engaged to be married, she did not see why he did not announce the fact, and have it over with. She had to repeat her prayers three times before she could keep the girl in the gilt frame out of them; and she solved the problem by praying that she might not make a fool of herself.

The next morning she went over to Jonathan Jackson's house to see what her friend and neighbor, the Junior Warden, would say about the matter. He could be trusted to keep silent and assist her to carry out some provisional plans. She knew exactly what she wished and what she intended to do; but she imagined that she wanted advice. In other words, she wanted the pleasure of hearing some one tell her that she was exactly right.

Jonathan Jackson was precisely the person to satisfy the demand, as his deceased wife had never allowed him to have any opinion for more than fifteen minutes at a time—if it differed from hers; and when she had made a pretense of consulting him, he had learned by long experience to hesitate for a moment, look judicially wise, and then repeat her suggestions as nearly as he could remember them. So Jonathan made a most excellent friend and neighbor, when any crisis or emergency called for an expert opinion.

MRS. BURKE had been an intimate friend of Sarah Jackson, and just before Mrs. Jackson died she made Hepsey promise that after she was gone she would keep a friendly eye on Jonathan, and see that he did not get into mischief, or let the house run down, or "live just by eatin' odds and ends off the pantry shelf any old way." Mrs. Jackson entertained no illusions in regard to her husband, and she trusted Hepsey implicitly. So, after Mrs. Jackson's mortal departure, Hepsey made periodic calls on Jonathan, which always gave him much pleasure until she became inquisitive about his methods of housekeeping; then he would grow reticent.

"Good morning, Jonathan," Hepsey called, as she presented herself at the woodshed door, where she caught Jonathan mending some of his underclothes laboriously.

"Well, I declare," she continued, "I'm blessed if you aint sewin' white buttons on with black thread. Is anybody dead in the family, or aint you feelin' well as to your head this mornin'?"

His voice quavered with mingled embarrassment and resentment as he replied:

"What difference does it make, Hepsey? It don't make no difference, as long as nobody don't see it but me."

"And why in the name of conscience don't you get a thimble, Jonathan? The idea of your stickin' the needle in, and then pressin' it against the chair to make it go through. If that aint just like a helpless man, I wouldn't say."

"Well, of course sewin' aint just a man's business anyway; and when he has just got to do it—"

"Why don't you let Mary McGuire do it for you? You pay her enough, certainly, to keep you from becomin' a buttonless orphan."

Mary McGuire, be it said, was the woman who came in by the day, and cooked for Jonathan, and intermittently cleaned him out of house and home.

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"She don't know much about such things," replied Jonathan confidentially. "I did let her do it for a while; but when my buttonholes got tore larger, instead of sewin' 'em up, she just put on a larger button; and I'd be buttonin' my pants with the covers of saucepans by now, if I'd let her go on."

"It is curious what helpless critters men are, specially widowers. Now Jonathan, why don't you lay aside your sewin', and invite me into your parlor? You aren't a bit polite."

"Well, come along then, Hepsey; but the parlor aint just in apple-pie order, as you might say. Things are mussed up a bit." He looked at her suspiciously.

When they entered the parlor Mrs. Burke gazed about in a critical sort of way.

"Jonathan Jackson, if you don't get married again before long I don't know what'll become of you," she remarked, as she wrote her name with the end of her finger in the dust on the center table. "Why don't you open the parlor occasionally and let the air in? It smells that musty in here I feel as if I was attendin' your wife's funeral all over again."

"Well, of course you know we never did use the parlor much, 'cept there was a funeral in the family, or you called, or things like that."

"Thank *you!* but even so, you might put things away occasionally, and not leave them scattered all over the place."

"What's the use? I never can find anything when it's where it belongs; but if it's left just where I drop it, I know right where it is when I want it."

"That's a man's argument. Sakes alive! The least you could do would be to shut your bureau drawers. You woudn't dare let things go like this when Sarah was livin'."

"No," Jonathan replied sadly, "but there's some advantages in bein' a widower. Of course I don't mean no disrespect to Sarah, but opinions will differ about some things. She'd never let me go up the front stairs without takin' my boots off, so as not to soil the carpet; and when she died and the relatives tramped up and down reckless like, I almost felt as if it was wicked. For a fact, I did."

"Well, I always told Sarah she was a slave to dust; I believe that dust worried her a lot more than her conscience, poor soul. I should think that Mary McGuire would tidy up for you a little bit once in a while."

"Well, Mary does the best she knows how. But I like her goin' better than comin'. The fact is, a man of my age can't live alone always, Hepsey. It's a change to live this way, till—"

"Oh, heaven save the mark! I can't stay here talkin' all day; but I'll tidy up a bit before I go, if you don't mind, Jonathan. You go on with what you call your sewin'."

"Go ahead, Hepsey. You can do anything you like," he replied, beaming upon her.

Mrs. Burke opened the blinds and windows, shook up the pillows on the lounge, straightened the furniture, dusted off the chairs and opened the door to the porch. She made a flying trip to the garden, and returned with a big bunch of flowers which she placed in a large glass vase on the mantel. Then she hung Jonathan's dressing gown over the back of a chair, and put his slippers suggestively near at hand. In a few moments she had transformed the whole appearance of the room, giving it a look of homelike coziness which had long been foreign to it.

HEPSEY had almost forgotten her errand; but now that her work was done it came back to her with sudden force; so, puckering up her lips and scowling severely at the carpet, she began:

"The fact is, Jonathan, I didn't come over here to dust the parlor or to jolly you. I've come to have a confidential talk with you about a matter of great importance."

"What is it, Hepsey?"

"Matrimony."

Jonathan started eagerly, and colored with self-conscious embarrassment; and after clearing his throat nervously, inquired:

"Did you think of contemplatin' matrimony again, Hepsey?—though this aint leap year."

"I, contemplate matrimony? Oh, land

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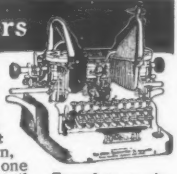
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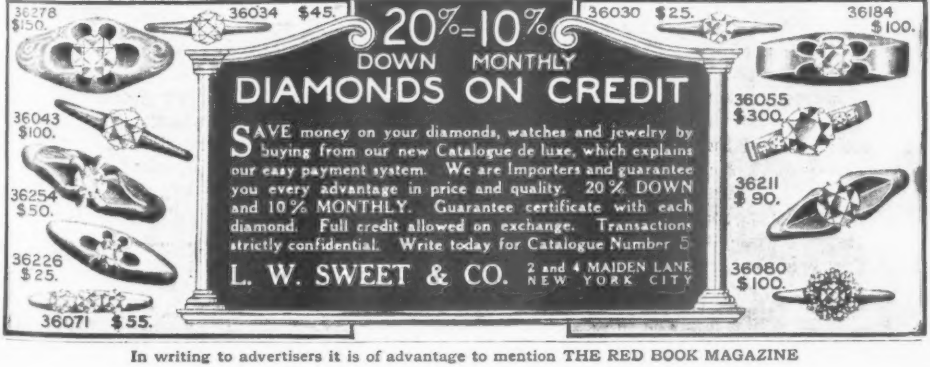
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of Gideon, *no*. It's about some one else. Don't get scared. I'm no kidnaper!"

"Well, who is it, then?" Jonathan inquired, with a touch of disappointment.

"My adopted son."

"You don't say! I've heard rumors about Maxwell and Virginia Bascom; but I didn't take no stock in 'em, knowin' Virginia."

"Virginia hasn't nothin' to do with it."

"Well, who has then, for land's sake!"

"I don't know the girl's name; but I saw her picture on his mantelpiece yesterday mornin', and I've had my suspicions for some time."

"Well, I suppose his marryin' aint none of our business anyway, be it?"

"Yes, it is our business; if he's goin' to get married, the rectory's got to be fixed over a whole lot 'fore it's fit to live in. You know the Senior Warden wont lift his finger, and you've got to help me do it."

Jonathan sighed profoundly, knowing from past experience that Hepsey's word carried more weight than all the vestry.

"I suppose I have, if you say so, Hepsey."

"Yes sir, you've got to help me do it. No decent girl is goin' into that house as it is, with my consent. It's the worst old rat-trap I ever saw. I've got the key, and I'm goin' through it this afternoon, and then I'm goin' to plan what ought to be done."

"But it seems to me you're venturin' some. You don't *know* they're goin' to be married."

"No, but all the symptoms point that way, and we've got to be prepared for it."

"But the people round town seem to think that Virginia has a first mortgage on the rector already."

"No doubt *she* thinks she has; but it aint true. He's made a blunder, though, not announcin' his engagement, and I'm goin' to tell him so the first chance I get. I don't see why he should air his private affairs all over the town, but if he don't announce his engagement before long, Virginia Bascom 'll make an awful row when he does."

"Yes, and to the best of my knowledge and belief this'll be her fifth row."

"Well, you meet me at the rectory at two o'clock sharp."

"But we ought to consult the vestry first," the Junior Warden cautioned her.

"What for, I'd like to know?"

"'Cause they are the trustees of the property."

"Then why don't they 'tend to the property? The vestry are a lot of—"

"Sh! Hepsey, be careful. I'll be there. I'll be there!"

Mrs. Burke rose and started for the door; but Jonathan called out to her:

"Hepsey, can't you stay to dinner? I'd like awful well to have you. It would seem so nice and homelike to see you sittin' opposite me at the table."

"Am I to consider this a proposal of marriage, Jonathan?"

"Well, I hadn't thought of it in that light: but if *you* would, I'd be mighty thankful."

But Hepsey was beating her retreat.

JONATHAN stood for a minute or two in the middle of the room and looked very sober. Slowly he took off his coat and put on his dressing gown. Then he sat down, and cautiously put his feet in another chair. Next he lighted a cigar —gazing about the room as if his late wife might appear at any moment as an avenging deity, and drag him into the kitchen where he belonged. But nothing happened, and he began to feel a realization of his independence. He sat and thought for a long time, and a mighty hunger of the heart overwhelmed him. Before he knew it, a tear or two had fallen on the immaculate carpet; and then, suddenly recollecting himself, he stood up, saying to himself—such is the consistency of man:

"Sarah was a good soul accordin' to her lights; but she's dead, and I must confess I'm powerful reconciled. Hepsey Burke's different. I wonder if—"

But he put the thought away from him with a "get thee behind me" abruptness, and putting on his coat, went out to water the stock.

The second installment of this charming novel will be in the December Red Book, on the news-stands November 23rd.

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And now here she is at home, all married and settled down. If you are a Billie Burke fan, you surely are eager to know how she lives. Now that you have sort of forgiven her for marrying, read about her as a bride.



BILLIE BURKE

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About Large Women

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EMPTY POCKETS

RUPERT HUGHES' NEW NOVEL OF NEW YORK

Continued from page 64 of this issue.

she knew the notorious rake and was rash enough to dance in his embrace, and to accept money from him, filled him with a terror for her in which jealousy was a potent chemical.

He could not believe that Muriel was as bad as rumor made all the rich. Even if she were, he was a doctor, not a minister, and it was not his business to convert her. But he was gravely disquieted.

She asked him if he could go with her to see Happy Hanigan, and he said that he could—he "happened" to be off duty. He did not explain that he had happened it by bullying and bribing another young and very sleepy surgeon to stay on duty a couple of hours longer.

MURIEL had kept the taxi, and they got into it.

"We must go first to the poor Italians and leave this money. Poor Happy Hanigan can wait awhile."

"He's waited several years," said Dr. Worthing. "And he's willing to wait many more. But those Italians—don't you think that five thousand dollars is a good deal to give them?"

"But that's what the Black Hand demands."

"Never pay the asking-price for anything. Bargain with 'em."

"But they'll hurt the boy."

"Not while there's money in sight. If you give them the five thousand right away, they'll hold back the child and ask a thousand more. Or they'll steal him again. And the kidnapers mustn't know there's a rich woman back of this or they'll never give up. They'll steal you. Start with five hundred and keep them anxious."

Muriel yielded to him almost with eagerness, though her father's use of the same arguments had horrified her.

The Angelilli had given Muriel up for lost. They greeted her now with cries of redemption. They recoiled from the doctor, till Muriel assured them that he was not a detective, and he proved it by expert advice on the harnessing, feeding, and ventilating of the two infants who were uncle and nephew.

It struck Muriel as droll that this young man should be teaching a grandmother how to raise babes, but he knew more than she did. He knew, for instance, that boiled cabbage and fried pork were not good for infants. Settlement house women had said the same thing to them and been disliked for it. But a handsome young doctor was different.

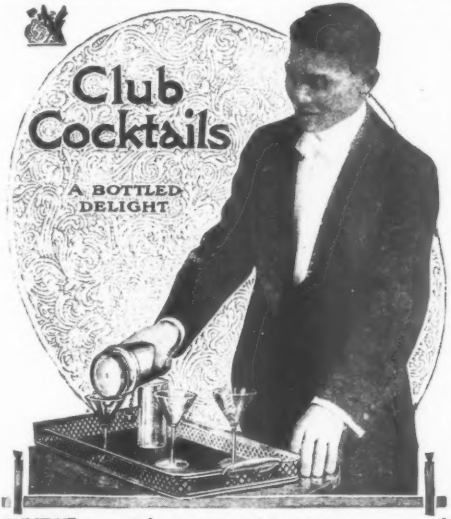
Doctor Worthing told the awe-smitten women that he was there to get them their boy, that he could raise eight hundred dollars if necessary, but they had better start at five hundred.

They accepted him as an oracle and Muriel made ready to take that inflammable money from her pocket-book. Doctor Worthing gave her a look and a slight shake of the head. He gave Gemma his own card, and telephone number, and told her to let him know when the kidnapers were ready to exchange the boy for the money. He asked if there were a way to get word to the kidnapers. Gemma explained that a man who sold them eggs for their bakery had said that he might help get the boy back.

"He's in the gang," said Worthing. "Tell him there's five hundred. And you'd better have the police watch him, and follow him."

Gemma shook her head. The police never found stolen goods, much less a stolen child. Muriel had prepared Worthing for this, and he did not press the point.

His quiet, cold manner calmed the hysterics of the women where Muriel's warm sympathy had aggravated them, and farewells were said in good order.



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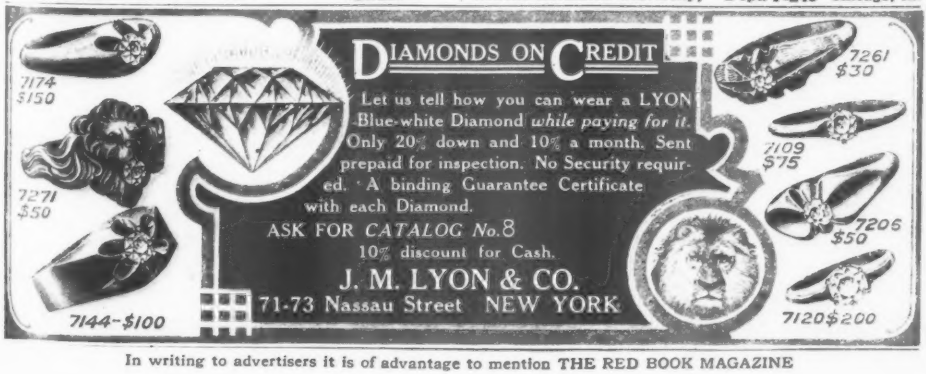
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Out in the tenement hall, Doctor Worthing said:

"I must apologize for taking the wheel out of your hand, but I don't want you mixed up in this. I'm afraid it might entangle you in no end of trouble."

"You're wonderfully kind," said Muriel, "and I'm awfully grateful. Will you take the money?"

She offered him the five thousand dollars. He shook his head:

"I'd probably abscond."

"Please take it."

But he would not, for countless reasons. She posed him a new problem.

"If we buy back the boy for only part of the money, do I give back the rest to Mr. Merithew?"

He had hated the idea of her taking money from such a man, yet he could not quite like the idea of returning any of it to him.

"Better put it into a general fund for the relief of human misery. Call it the Merithew endowment, and see how far it will go."

"What a perfectly corking idea!" she cried. "We'll just do it. And now for poor little Happy."

They climbed the stairs, and knocked at the Hanigan portal a long while before they brought to the opposite door a Greek lady who did not at all resemble the classic canons in any of her proportions. She informed them that Mrs. Hanigan was out scrubbing; Mr. Hanigan was with the horse, and the poor boy had gone to work down the street selling his papers.

"With all his bruises!" Muriel sighed.

"There's no rest for the poor," said Worthing. "What's next?"

"The poor Balinsky family," said Muriel. "What if we should be too late and they should have been sent away. It would kill them all; I'm sure of it. Hurry, hurry!"

"I'm afraid I haven't time to go to Ellis Island. I'm expected back at the hospital."

"You wouldn't desert me now, would you?" Muriel exclaimed.

"I'd rather desert my job," said Worthing, and they clattered down the stairs together.

CHAPTER XII

ON the free municipal ferry that plies between the Barge Office and Ellis Island, Muriel from the upper deck caught sight of Michal Balinsky and pointed him out to Worthing. He was peering forward toward the little island with the big buildings—the great sieve where nearly a million immigrants a year are sifted and the discarded thousands flung back to Europe.

As they reached it a tug-load of deported wretches puffed away to carry the human refuse to the steamers that brought them to America. Desperate women were screaming and fighting against the fate that had lured them thousands of weary miles to a door that closed in their faces.

When Muriel learned who they were, her confidence in her success faltered. In the huge waiting room she saw barge-loads of newcomers passed through the alley where the doctors examined them hastily and turned some into the freedom of the country and sent others to the detention pens for further study. She realized how small one soul was in this everlasting flood of souls hunting for a paradise in America.

The ordeal they must pass through was a little Judgment Day on earth. Balinsky had passed it once, to heaven and reunion with his family. Now they were to be dragged out of heaven and thrust down into hell.

Muriel introduced him to Doctor Worthing, and they went to the Assistant Commissioner to plead for Rachel's release. The Assistant Commissioner found it easy to be gracious to so pretty a member of so powerful a family, but he repeated what he had told Mr. Chivot: he could not interfere.

Doctor Worthing asked permission to see the girl, in his capacity as a physician retained by her counsel and Muriel insisted on going along.

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In one room they passed, Muriel saw three hundred men and boys, old and young, good and bad, criminal and insane. The women's quarters were of the same quality, only the prisoners were more pitiful. Some of them were brazen and offered to flirt Doctor Worthing out of Muriel's possession. The reasons for their deportation were plain. Muriel was not educated to the post-graduate height of being sorry for them.

The feeble-bodied mother Balinsky and her feeble-minded daughter were brought forward, and the mother came hastening with a new fever of hope. The daughter was not anxious, not troubled at all. She had her own merry thoughts and snickered to herself over her secret amusements.

Her weird humor sent Muriel's blood to ice. She was afraid of her, with all the shuddering dread of the young for those whom a younger world believed to be filled with devils.

But Doctor Worthing was not afraid, and Muriel was extravagantly impressed by his gentle forcefulness, the searching scholarship of his eyes.

He led the mother aside and talked to her. She flushed and stammered, and what she told seemed to stir Worthing out of his calm. On his set jaws little muscles worked and white flashes alternated with red. At length he came back to Muriel and murmured:

"We'd better go now."

"Is there no hope?" Muriel sighed.

He shook his head.

"Better tell them good-by."

Balinsky had caught the question "No hope?" and the answer.

He began tearing at his beard and at his hair, gnawing his wrists and the backs of his hands, and snarling as if he would destroy himself. He was trying to keep from shrieking aloud. His wife ran to him to quiet him. Even Rachel ceased giggling and tried to soothe her father as if he were a doll.

Muriel was overwhelmed by her failure; her lips whitened; her eyes glazed. She would have broken down and wept madly, but Doctor Worthing led her out into the sea air and tried to comfort her. In her distress, she leaned against him for strength.

"You must get away from here at once," he insisted. "It's no place for you. You aren't meant for such scenes."

"If they can stand them, I can," she answered, clenching all her muscles. "I'm as strong as anybody. I'm not going to give up. The poor souls—there's no hope then?"

"I don't know," he said. "There might be."

"Then why in heaven's name did you tell them there wasn't any?" she demanded.

"They've been fooled often enough. If we can save them, that will be time enough to tell them. But to raise their hopes again—no."

"What do you plan to do?" she demanded.

"See the Commissioner. I don't believe the girl's really insane. It's just a collapse of nerves. She had a horrible experience in Russia—I can't tell you what it was, but, well, there's one Russian officer I'd like to vivisect. The girl tried to kill him. I wish she had. But she had to be kept in hiding in a dark cellar for months, with almost no food. And she walked a hundred miles by night, hiding by day; and got across the frontier in disguise; and made the journey to the sea, and crossed in the steerage in stormy weather; they were battened in for eight days. They got to New York at last. She met her father, and the sunlight and liberty, and she almost died of joy. Then the big city overwhelmed her with its crowds and its richness. And then the hard times came: her father lost his job. She worked day and night in a smothering little room and had nothing much to eat and tried to learn the new language and finally she went into nervous bankruptcy. I think that's all. Who wouldn't? The wonder is that she is alive. If she had rest and good food and some relief from terror, she'd come out all right, I'm sure. If they ship her back to Russia, she'll die. There's no question of it."

"I can give her food and rest," Muriel cried. "I'll get her out to the country. She shall have everything, everything. If only we can get her away from this hideous place!"

"That's the problem."

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II

THEY went back to the Commissioner. Doctor Worthing told what he had learned from the girl's mother, what he believed about her condition. The law permits an alien with a mental defect to be deported without recourse, but since Muriel Schuyler stood sponsor for Rachel, the Commissioner consented to forward an appeal. He could do nothing more than that except to delay her deportation till the appeal to a higher authority was heard.

"And they wont go on that ship today?" Muriel asked.

"No, it will be some weeks, perhaps, before the appeal can be reached for a hearing."

Suddenly the Commissioner who had looked as fiendishly heartless as a Rhadamanthus was transformed to a saint in Muriel's eyes. She had an impulse to hug him, but resisted it. She dragged Doctor Worthing back to the detention room to tell Balinsky the good news. He was not there. On the floor in a huddle of abject surrender was his wife; at her side was Rachel, holding her fingers before her face and laughing at them.

Muriel ran to Mrs. Balinsky, knelt by her and told her that she would not be taken that day, nor for weeks, and if there were any justice on earth, not forever.

The woman had no strength to be glad with. She mumbled a few words of the Jargon and feebly patted Muriel's hand.

"Where is your husband? I must tell him."

"Gone," she whispered.

MURIEL ran to the slip. The ferry had just shoved out. She waved and called, but no one heard or saw her, least of all Balinsky whom she could see bent upon the rail, his face in his crossed arms.

There was no way to overtake him or to reach shore save by the same boat on its next trip.

There was much time to kill and they spent it in wandering about the island. Its buildings seemed like temples now, and the devoted workers in the hospitals and administration buildings seemed to be priests of a lofty creed. There was leisure for much talk with her companion. They were like two recruits happening to march at elbow through a great battle. Henceforth they were comrades.

It was the same world; the same things were happening in the same sky, buildings, streets, islands and waterways; but the light had changed and the eyes that looked upon it all had changed. Therefore it was another world. So Hell and Heaven might be the same place, and serve both for damnation and paradise.

CHAPTER XIII

THREE sewing machines were simmering in a row with a murmur of many kettles drumming under dancing lids. In a corner an ancient white bearded sempster was making long stitches by hand, the needle dipping to the cloth, then stretching far away, like a swan drinking.

Dogged fatigue bent the necks of all the workers but one; and her, a keener distress than fatigue tormented into tossing her head and tossing her eyes upward till they were but white lines of despair.

A geranium in the window chimed one little velvet tone. And the girl's face was lifted on the stem of its throat with the same wistful beauty. Her beauty was as poignant and as alien and as trite as the Miserere from "Il Trovatore" which a street piano was shattering forth on the pavement below for children to dance to.

Like a marquise in rags dumped in a tumbril for the guillotine, fate seemed to have this girl in a cart jouncing down the road to an ugly end. Her feet that plied the iron treadles were exquisitely out of place and her hands exquisitely inappropriate to the wheel.

Her feet plied the treadle incessantly, and incessantly under her silken hands flowed rough fabrics like a little brook that passed under the stabbing needle and fell to the floor in a cataract.



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Her fingers, lifted now and then to thrust back from her hot forehead an encroaching tendril of her umber hair, paused at times to pluck at her throat and push aside the light waist, laying bare a beauty that was pitiful, for it would have honored Orient pearls to lie there.

Here was the beggar maid ready to grace a throne. But where was her *Cophetua!* She seemed to dream him and await him: for the eyes she cast about the dingy tenement ached with revulsion and closed again upon their own visions.

Young, beautiful, clean, lovable, she glowed among the débris of squalor, a flame in ashes. It was midsummer in the year but just spring in her soul. Yet she sat and sewed from early morning till late at night.

She was not sewing upon delicate fabrics for herself or for other beautiful women. She sewed upon rough, cheap wear for rough, cheap men. She sewed in the stifling hot room, and the sweat of toil and of heat beaded on her forehead and on her neck, and dropped on her hands.

All the rest of the Sokalski family worked likewise: the decrepit grandfather in the corner, the father at the sewing machine, the mother when she was not at the stove, the plump little sister Dosia and the boarder Pasinsky, who shared their two rooms and their two meals with them.—all sewed.

The new labor laws had rendered the old sweatshops untenable: the factory regulations and inspections were so strict now that the shoddier manufacturers preferred to give out piece work to be done at home. It was not necessary to pay foremen to drive these people. It was not necessary to pay for overtime or night work. These wretches in the eternal contest with rent and food drove themselves and wrought on till they dropped.

The Sokalskis were what is known as "pants finishers." The father, Adam Sokalski, made trips to the shop, staggering under a load of completed "garments," and came away staggering under a load of "cut-outs."

They worked usually without talk. Today when they spoke at all they spoke of poor Balinsky, whose lot was worse than theirs. Adam, who was very religious, used Balinsky for a moral and said how glad they should all be that they were together while Balinsky's home was wrecked. He said that God was good to them and they should be grateful.

Maryla said nothing, but she swept the room with bitter eyes and smiled bitterly at the long seam she was making.

They spoke of the fine lady who had promised her help and ridden away in the beautiful car. But she had not come back. No doubt by now poor Rachel and her mother were on the steamer that was to take them to the Russian Gehenna.

And then a lean hand clacked like a skeleton's at the door and Michal Balinsky came in. Mrs. Sokalska was at the stove and he sank on her chair. He answered the questioning eyes with a flopping motion of his arms, and they knew from his attitude that he had been unable to rescue his family from the government.

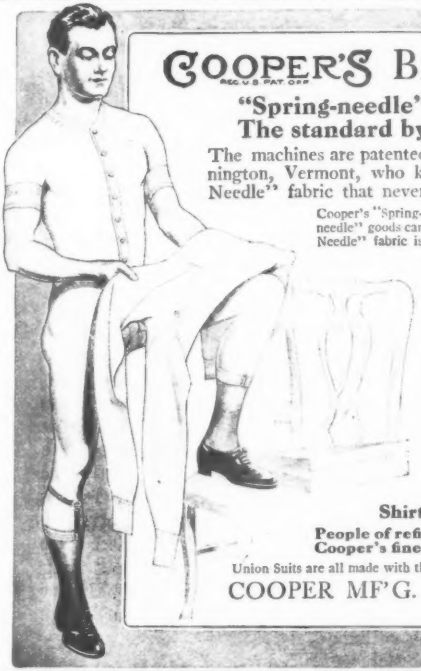
"I couldn't vait to see dem tooked by *das Schiff*. I could not do it. *Ach, du lieber Gott!*"

His head rolled with sickly dizziness on his gaunt shoulders, and he would have slid from his chair but Rosa ran to him and gathered him up, saying:

"You should lay down once, Michal."

She lifted him and supported him into the next room and lowered him to a cot that was there by a window opening on a court. She offered to make him *"ein Täschen Thee"* but he shook his head and closed his eyes, and she left him. She did not notice that a pair of long, sharp shears lay on the windowsill at his hand.

She went back to work, and the sewing machines simmered again. The oldster's hand rose and dipped like a black swan's neck; Adam hunched over his machine and pedaled like a spent bicycle racer on the seventh day. Rosa's fat legs waddled at her treadles and she puffed hard, rising now and then to go to the stove and make a clatter that fretted the weary laborers. Plump little Dosia sewed and listened to the racket from the street, and Henryk Pasinsky, the boarder, glanced at the beauty of Maryla, who



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PATENTED JULY 8, 1913.



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NEVERBIND FITS like your collar, hat or shoes. It can't choke your leg—always lifts on the socks just enough to keep them smooth.

If you don't find it at your dealers we'll send sample pair, postpaid, for 25c, mercerized; 35c, double grip; 50c, silk.

GEORGE FROST CO. Sole Makers, Boston, Mass.

sewed and sighed inaudibly, pausing now and then to beat her breast as if to pound down the rebellion smoldering there.

There were no other sounds—just the *whir, whir, whir* of the machines, the squeal of rusty treadles and the discouraged squeaks of a shabby canary hopping from perch to perch in its little cage.

Later there was an unusual noise in the streets as two pushcart peddlers disputed a strip of curb, and in that extra din nobody heard the short grunt and the low moan of Balinsky as he pressed the shears against his side and rolled over upon them burying his mouth in the blanket to smother his anguish.

II

BY and by there was an unfamiliar knock at the door; the machines stopped whirring, and the toilers looked at one another a moment before Rosa called:

"*Herein.*"

The door opened, and Muriel stood at the sill; behind her was young Doctor Worthing.

"I beg your pardon," said Muriel.

Maryla rose to her feet, and Pasinsky stood up respectfully. Muriel recognized Maryla and smiled.

"Isn't this Miss Sokalska? I'm Miss Schuyler. I met you yesterday. I'm sorry to break in on you without warning, but we went to Mr. Balinsky's home in Batavia Street and he had gone. They told us he might be here. I was so anxious to get word to him that they aren't going to send his wife and daughter away."

This good news was too stunning for speech. The starers only stared a little harder. Rosa sat down and Adam rose quickly.

"Dey dun't sendet Rachel and Miriam avay now?" Rosa fluttered.

"No," said Muriel. "They've granted us an appeal. She wont go for weeks and she wont go at all if we can help it. Doctor Worthing and I—this is Doctor Worthing; you have him to thank for it. And he thinks the girl will get well, don't you, Doctor Worthing?"

Doctor Worthing nodded. Rosa lifted herself to her feet beating her palms together and stumbled into the other room crying:

"Michal! Michal! dey dun't gone yet! dey dun't gone never, maybe!"

And then she screamed and fled backward gaping.

She could not speak. She could only stammer and point with a shivering hand.

III

AFTER the first hubbub of terror, Doctor Worthing took charge of the panic-filled home. He rolled the bleeding wretch to his other side, drew the shears from the wound, cut away the clothes and catching the flesh in his strong fingers checked the hemorrhage.

He cast his eyes on the palsied little mob, crowding about him, ordered them away with a rough "Get out and stay out." Then he hesitated a moment before he called:

"Oh, Miss Schuyler!"

"Yes," she answered from the other room.

"Would you mind—do you think you could help me a moment?"

"Certainly," she said, as she came to the door.

"Are you—are you plucky enough to hold this—like this?"

"I'll—I'll try," she said weakly.

"It's to save a life or I wouldn't ask you."

"Of course," she panted.

He showed her how to squeeze the severed arteries; she peeled off her gloves, set her jaws and obeyed him. He whipped off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, wrote a few words on a piece of paper and sent Dosia flying to the nearest drug store; then he sent Rosa scurrying for hot water and salt, and Maryla for bandages, while he scoured his own hands with relentless violence.

Muriel watched him as he went about his task, and his concise methods fascinated her so that she forgot to faint. How amazing it was that she should be here in this place ministering to this poor alien, whose side was pierced as with a spear.

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You will be amazed to know how Cat's Paw Heels have greatly reduced the number of accidents from slipping on wet sidewalks, ice or polished floors.

The Foster Friction Plug won't let you slip. It is set in Cat's Paw Rubber Heels right where the weight falls—right where the wear comes. Not only prevents slipping but ***makes 'em wear longer.***

CAT'S PAW
CUSHION
RUBBER HEELS

All Dealers 50¢ Attached

Note the three arrows. Each points to a sign of safety.

The first shows the Foster Orthopedic Heel which affords safety against falling arches. Gives extra support where needed. Especially valuable for heavy people and those who are on their feet a great deal.

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DEAF

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Eventually Dosia returned with the druggist himself, Mr. Pytlik, who was also a trained nurse and occasional physician. He brought sterilized gauze and adhesive plasters, stimulants and antiseptics and a case of instruments. He offered to take Muriel's place, and Doctor Worthing dismissed her with a word of praise.

"Thank you and—my congratulations."

Muriel bowed and turned for the door. The prop of necessity was gone, and she made a toper's effort to walk a chalk line. She got to the other room, whispering almost inaudibly, "I never fainted in my life and I'm not going to now."

But Maryla, seeing by her face that she was about to wilt, ran and caught her, thrust a chair against her knees and hastened for the vinegar cruet. Muriel bent her head forward almost to her knees and the blood came back to her. She bullied herself into resistance and put off Maryla's ministrations with a grateful smile.

"Thank you, I'm all right now. I mustn't be a silly coward," she said. "What's a little blood?"

"You are tairible brave," said Maryla. "I would have run away, me."

"Thank you," said Muriel, surprised at the tribute and the amount of comfort it gave her.

FROM force of habit Maryla sat down at her sewing machine. She was almost always there. There was always work to do. Automatically her feet began to plod the old treadmill, her hands to slide the fabric forward. She looked back to Muriel and apologized: "Excuse it, please." Adam had settled again to his task as soon as the doctor took charge of Balinsky. He had dragged Dosia back to her machine, and Pasinsky had returned to his. With sly glances he seemed to be comparing Muriel and Maryla to Maryla's advantage. The old man, short-sighted, deaf and senile, had known nothing of the turmoil. He continued to stitch as if he were hastening to finish his own shroud. Muriel wondered how he kept from sewing his own beard to it.

To drown the noises from the other room, she cast about for a topic of conversation; she could do no better than:

"Pretty hot day, isn't it?"

"Tairible," said Maryla.

"Too hot for you to be working here."

This almost brought a smile to Maryla. As if the weather had anything to do with it! Muriel tried to be gracious.

"I suppose you'd rather finish your work now so that you can have the cool of the evenings free," she ventured next.

Maryla smiled patiently.

"My rather is what I do not get. By night too we work."

"Really?" said Muriel. "It must be all the better when Sunday comes. Central Park is beautiful now, isn't it? Do you go there often?"

"Ah! Tsentral Park? Oh yes, I go by Tsentral Park in my own texikeb!" She laughed till she saw that Muriel was puzzled at her irony. Irony is impolite. She dropped it:

"Never did I see that park yet. It is too much for a walking. It takes helf a day and ten cents it costs to go by street cars."

"What's ten cents?" Muriel exclaimed before she realized how it might sound here.

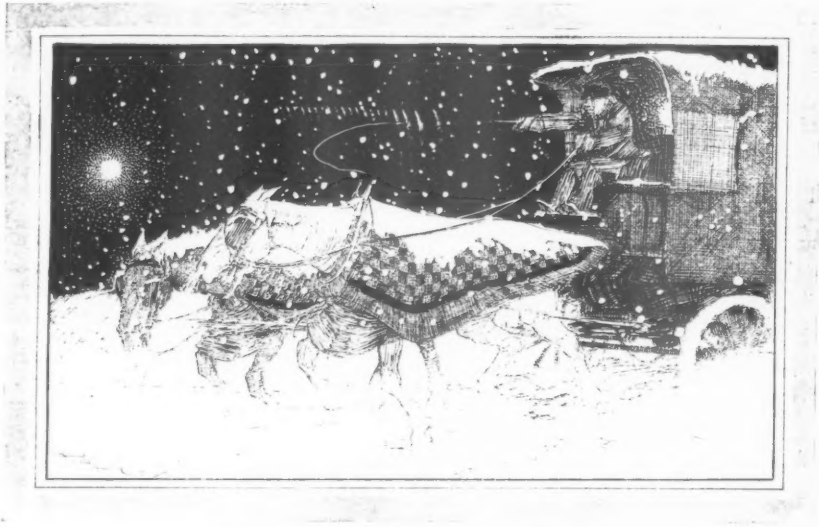
"Ten cents means much sewing, much aching; ten cents means dinner for us all."

"You've never seen Central Park? You've never been uptown?" Muriel cried. Maryla shook her head as if answering the foolish questions of a child. Muriel could not endure the dogged drudgery and the silence broken only by the sounds from the next room, the groans of Balinsky and the business of the doctor.

"And what are you sewing?" Muriel asked.

"Pents."

Maryla had to repeat it before the wondering Muriel recognized it as a word she hated. The more hateful it seemed to her that so fine a woman as Maryla should devote her days and nights and her eyes and her soul to such manufacture.



The Cruise of a CHRISTMAS CARAVAN

IS A STORY FOR EVERYBODY WHO BELIEVES IN CHRISTMAS

IT TELLS the journey of the express delivery wagon on the night before Christmas—the journey of Old Saint Nick, and the Dunders and Blitzens of 1914—and it's chock full of real Christmas spirit.

¶ If you believe in Christmas, you must read this story. Harris Merton Lyon is the author and November 23rd is the day scheduled for its publication in

THE DECEMBER ISSUE OF THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

IV

DOCTOR WORTHING came in now with Mr. Pytlik. He had finished repairing the rent in Balinsky's side, so far as he could do it. The rest of the work was Balinsky's. Mr. Pytlik was loud in praise of the young surgeon:

"He done fine. Never a finer job have I seen, no, not by clinics."

Then he laid his finger alongside his nose and winked profoundly and said:

"Such an onfortunit eccident!" and went away.

"For why makes he a vinkink?" Adam demanded.

"Because," said Doctor Worthing. "I told him to say that Balinsky fell on the shears by accident."

This lie set up a flutter which he quieted at once when he explained:

"If it gets out that he tried to commit suicide, he will be arrested and sent to prison. And then where are we?"

There was a low moaning of that old "Oi, oi!" which was heard in the high Greek tragedy.

Doctor Worthing called for more water and Rosa filled a basin at the faucet and held it for him. While he scoured his blood-stained arms and hands he told her how to care for Balinsky. He had given him the tonic of hope, and she must convince him that his Miriam and his Rachel would be restored to him. Muriel added her vow that it should be accomplished.

Muriel continued to study Maryla furtively. The Polish girl was so remote, so utterly unlike herself, that there could be no sense of rivalry, no excuse for that instant jealousy of one woman for another.

To Muriel, Maryla's presence here seemed a crime. The very fact of being a flower gave her a right to a place in the sun. It is the right and the business of flowers to decorate the light.

Muriel felt one of those impulses of hers coming on. She rose and went to the machine and stopped Maryla's hand at the wheel.

"Do you know that I'm going to do with you?" said Muriel.

"No, ma'am," said Maryla.

"I'm going to bundle you into that taxicab downstairs and take you for a good long ride."

Maryla laughed. Angels do not happen nowadays.

"I mean it." Muriel insisted.

Even there and then, even that woman's first protest was:

"But I got nothing to wear."

Muriel wanted to cuff her ears but she said:

"It's a closed taxicab and nobody can see you. But you can see everybody."

Maryla shook her head. Her mother and Dosia assailed her with protests. They would doubtless have been glad to go along, but Muriel did not feel quite up to that Samaritan sublimity. Even Adam nodded his consent.

Pasinsky rose and lifted Maryla from the chair and put his hands on his heart.

"Pleasse—to pleasse me. I esk you, I esk you."

Doctor Worthing, seeing that Muriel was in earnest, prescribed the outing for Maryla and she consented. She brought forth a hat that was in good taste and of a simplicity that would have cost a lot of money in Paris. Also she slipped behind a calico hanging that served as a wardrobe and a boudoir and emerged in her other dress. She had made it herself and it became her.

Muriel went to tell Balinsky good-by. He looked like a wax effigy. As she promised him the salvation of his household a thin little worm of blood crawled through his cheek. He was down indeed, utterly dependent on help, a curious object to be causing the amount of trouble he was giving everybody: clogging the wheels of the government, taking the time of the busy, robbing the poor of their space and food and pence, and wringing the heart of the rich.

But it is well that the big ships should stop and turn about at the cry "Man overboard" no matter who or what the man, lest the habit of mercy be lost and love cease to make the world go round.

CHAPTER XIV

THERE was no little excitement in Orchard Street when Maryla Sokalska stepped into the taxicab. The neighbors thought she must be arrested by



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THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY, Room 1167, 111 Fifth Avenue, New York City

detectives or, more fascinating still, was being carried away by a pair of those white slave dealers who had been so fashionable a sensation in all the newspapers for a year or two.

Maryla was something of a sensation to herself; but after the first few spine-snapping plunges of her first taxicab, she settled back upon the cushions with a fair imitation of one who had been born in a limousine. Most women are luxurists by nature and are drawn to finery, as incubator or hen-bred ducks take to the first water they can reach.

Doctor Worthing had to get out at Thirty-first Street. When Muriel asked him to finish the ride, he answered:

"Do you want to lose me my job? It's probably gone already."

"You'd easily get another one," said Muriel with adulation. "We haven't seen Happy Hanigan yet. May I call you up to-morrow?"

"All telephone orders promptly filled," he said, and dropped to the ground.

How well acquainted they had become and how busy they had been together without working at all upon the original cause of their acquaintance! Happy was like a dissonant little chord by which a tune modulates into an entirely new key.

Maryla smiled to herself as Muriel stared after the form of Doctor Worthing striding through the crowd. If he had been a young god vanishing into a thick mist, she could hardly have admired him more. She did not realize how fervently she sighed.

"Isn't he wonderful?"

"Wanderfool!" said Maryla, and felt more at ease, seeing that even the great Miss Schuyler was ordinary clay.

The taxicab moved across to Fifth Avenue and on north. Maryla's pride kept her from expressing her excitement over the new country she was visiting. The gleaming Avenue with its wealth-choked sidewalks, and windows, filled her with a symphonic music. The shops with the gowns, the hats, the jewels pleading to be bought and worn, sickened her with desire. When at length they reached the suave roads and green velvet of the park, it suffered by comparison with the windows. The Park was very beautiful of course, and she would have reveled in it if she had not seen the shop windows first. They followed her in memory.

Woman-like, she had been able to see and remember details extraordinarily. One glance at a complex gown left its every detail in her mind.

Riverside Drive, the heroic river, the lofty tomb of General Grant—all these things were fine, of course, but she saw them as through shop windows darkly.

Muriel watched her and understood how much was mutely expressed in that passionate ardor of womankind for gorgeous things to put on, and wear about.

Then it suddenly occurred to her that she had a fussy old father who was probably setting the police on her trail.

Muriel might have stopped at a drug-store and telephoned, but it would be quicker to run home in a taxicab. She could hardly dispossess Maryla, so far north. She took Maryla home with her.

II

THE footman, who had said, "Why, Miss Muriel" when she ran out, now that she came back, said: "Oh, Miss Muriel! Your father's looking for you, Miss, and he's scoured the town over for you. You're not hurt, are you?

"No, but I want tea—tea for two. Then telephone Mr. Chivot that I'm home, and ask him to find Father and set his mind at rest."

Maryla was confounded almost to tears by the majesty of the Schuyler home outside and inside. She sat meekly on the edge of a haughty chair, and when two servants brought in the tea in a little city of silver structures on a prairie of silver, she was so tremulous before the splendor that she could hardly hold her cup. Her cup and saucer fairly chattered like the teeth of fright.

But she did her best. Muriel was telling her about the excursion to Ellis Island and the priceless wisdom of Doctor Worthing, and Maryla asked mischievously:

"Is he your faller?"

"The idea!" Muriel stammered. "I only met him yesterday."



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"Yesterday is enough," Maryla taunted, gaining new self-confidence at seeing the confusion of Muriel. Muriel denied the implication, but she did not resent it.

WHEN the tea-city was solemnly deported, Muriel wondered how she might further entertain her exotic visitor. An inspiration came to her:

"You have such taste in dress, Miss Sokalska, I wonder if you'd like to see the new frocks I brought over from Paris last month."

She said this as Jacob would have asked another millionaire bibliophile if he would like to see his tall copy of the first folio of Shakepeare and his unique "Doctor Faustus."

Maryla answered by rising instantly. Muriel led her upstairs—led Maryla Sokalska up Jacob's Ladder! Muriel's maid was at the country place and Muriel had the privilege of taking the gowns from the hangers herself. It was like showing off a fairy wardrobe, lifting out yards of rainbow, heaps of huge petals, and skeins of mist. As the old librarian reveled in the pride of owning first editions and works with uncut leaves, so Maryla exulted in these unworn prophecies of fashion.

Maryla gave up her effort at an air of satisfied indifference. She was ravished at the beauty of the gowns and said so. When Muriel went to the dress closet to bring out her best, she glanced back and saw that Maryla was hugging one of the frocks to her breast, and nuzzling it with her cheek.

Muriel came back and said:

"I'm glad you like that gown. I want to give it to you."

Maryla shook her head with doleful pride. Muriel pleaded with her. Maryla's final answer was:

"Where could I wear it now?"

She simply would not be bullied into accepting the charity even of such raiment. Muriel urged:

"You could wear it anywhere you would."

"I'm a woiking goil," said Maryla in the cockney of New York.

"Even so," Muriel insisted, "you ought to work on nice things. You ought to be a dressmaker. If I got you a position as a sewing woman uptown, would you accept it? You could earn ever so much more than you do by sewing on those—those horrid—pants!"

The idea appealed so strongly to Muriel that she picked up the telephone at the head of her bed and called the number of one of her dressmakers:

"Is that you Mr. Dutilh?" she said. "This is Miss Schuyler." The answer came back:

"Miss Schuyler! it's high time you were reporting. Why haven't you been in? The new importations are just arriving. There are several marvelous gowns you'll be sure to want."

"Hush, you robber! There's just one thing I want to-day. I want you to give a friend of mine a job—a job as sewing woman."

When Miss Schuyler expressed a wish it was to Dr. Dutilh's profit to grant it at any cost. He could always slip the expense into the next bill.

"Anybody Miss Schuyler sends I'll employ of course," said Mr. Dutilh.

"We'll be right down," said Miss Schuyler.

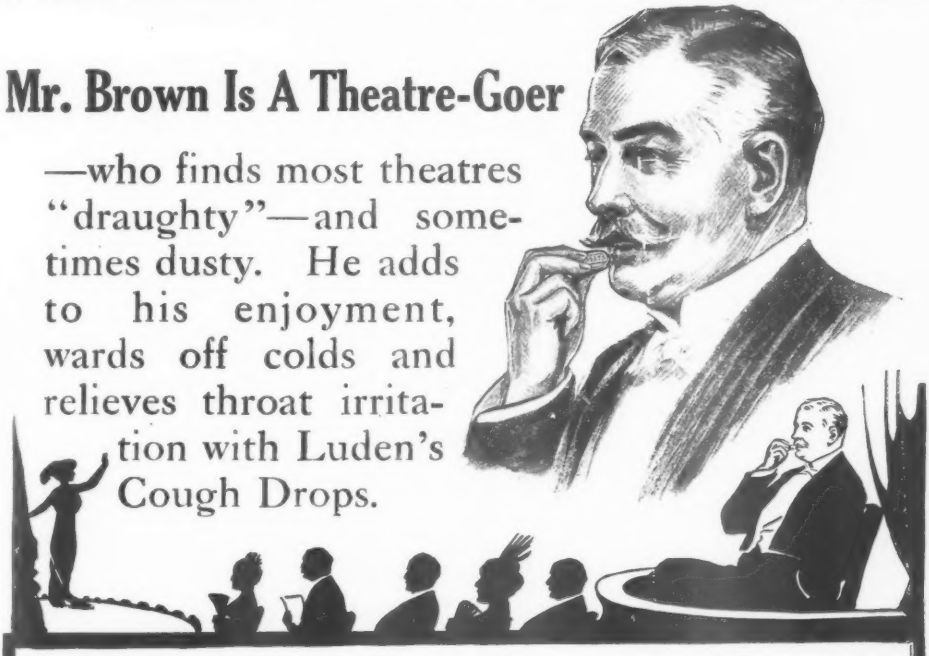
As they descended Jacob's Ladder. Jacob himself appeared at the foot of it and cut off their escape. He had just come in and just learned of Muriel's presence in the house.

As usual the torments of anxiety and aching love that had filled him while he thought her lost were instantly curdled to rage when he found her safe. When we go on a wild goose chase and return exhausted to find our pet at home, our first desire is to wring the wild goose's neck. Jacob was so furious that Maryla's presence acted as no restraint.

"What in the name of all that's holy, do you mean, Muriel, by scaring me to death like this? What's got into you that you go stampeding all over the place? I made Parny take me down to that awful hole you went to yesterday. I told him I'd fire him if he ever did again. I climbed the infernal stairs to that old Irish crone's kennel, and she said that 'never a know she knew of where you was, only that you'd been there while she was not within in the house.' Ugh! Then I went down to that Dago hole,

Mr. Brown Is A Theatre-Goer

—who finds most theatres "draughty"—and sometimes dusty. He adds to his enjoyment, wards off colds and relieves throat irritation with Luden's Cough Drops.

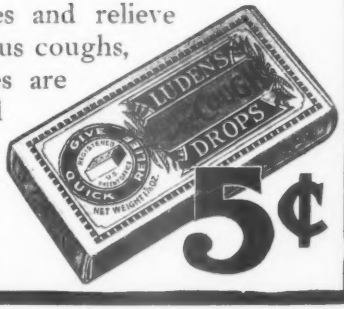


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Menthol Candy Cough Drops

"Give Quick Relief"

Luden's open up the bronchial tubes and relieve throat irritation, often preventing serious coughs, colds and sore throats. Air passages are cleaned—vocal cords are strengthened by using Luden's.



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"Luden's Have A Hundred Uses"

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WM. H. LUDEN, Mfg. Confectioner, Reading, Pa.

and they didn't know your name, only that a beautiful angel had been there with a beautiful doctor.

"At the office, Chivot told me that he'd had a telephone from the Assistant Commissioner at Ellis Island saying that you had turned the whole place upside down, defied the United States Government and started an appeal to Washington. He said you had a young doctor with you there, too—named Wordsworth or something.

"Who is this fellow? Where'd he come from? Where did you meet him? What's the matter with you anyway? Have you gone insane?"

Maryla wanted to run, but she dared not pass the irate dragon. When her father stormed, she cowered and obeyed. What would Muriel do?

Muriel sat down on the stairs and grinned from between the hands she rested her face in.

"You old darling, did you really miss me? You ought to have been a politician. You make a wonderful speech."

"How dare you! Your impudence is as shameless as your conduct!"

"Oh daddy dear, come on out of the Ark. In the first place, I'm of age, and in the second I've been on my best behavior. And not in half as much danger as if I'd been riding to the hounds. And I haven't spent a penny of your money—only Merry Perry's."

"Muriel!" he thundered, but she cooed with the insolent allure of a benevolent Circe.

"Now, Jacob, you know you never could scare me or bluff me. We'll be awfully good pals if you'll just be a nice man. You're giving Miss Sokalska an entirely wrong impression of you."

He was purpling with ire and his throat was swelling like an alligator's. She quelled him as she rose.

"I'm sounding my horn, Daddy—honk! honk! You wont get hurt if you stick to the sidewalk."

Then she marched down the stairs and swept past him. What can a father do nowadays? He may not spank or beat or imprison his daughters: his threats are idle. Jacob pivoted on his heels in a state of helpless rage and helpless recognition that she was a splendid girl and he was proud of her. He took refuge in sarcasm:

"Are you going to honor your mother and me with any more of your society or are you going to move to Chinatown?"

"Oh, no, I'll go home with you in the yacht. I've got an engagement with Merry Perry."

"What!"

"I've got to report about his money."

"Oh, you have, have you?"

"Yes, I'll meet you at the yacht in half an hour. Come along, Miss Sokalska."

Maryla, left marooned on the stairway, stole down the steps and sidled round Jacob's bulk, like a cat getting past a bulldog. She followed Muriel out. Her head was full of new American ideas. In her home, her father, though he was only a slave chained to a sewing machine, treated his women with patriarchal authority. But the great Jacob Schuyler was a mere child to his own child.

Muriel, little realizing what seeds of revolt she had put into the head of Maryla, led her on to yet greater danger—all with the most noble motives.

IV

WHEN Muriel walked into the Dutilh building with Maryla, they were just preceded by no less eminent a lady than Winnie Nicolls' mother under a hat of still greater eminence. For all her power, Mr. Dutilh greeted her with his usual extravagance of flattery and insult:

"My God, take off that lid. You're a sight. You never got that in my shop." He turned to Muriel. "She's a pretty woman too, when she lets me pick out her things. But did you ever see such a bunch of tripe on a human head?"

Muriel was afraid to make any answer. Maryla was aghast at his impertinence, yet he was to be her rescuer from the treadmill.

He sold Muriel a gown before she could prevent him, and she had to close her eyes against the others he dangled before her.

Meanwhile he was taking note of Maryla, appraising her face, her figure. He called her to look at a hat that he might see her walk. At length he said:



V. STEFANSSON
famous explorer
"Tuxedo is mild, cool and soothing—just the sort of tobacco I need. Tuxedo goes with me wherever I go."



G. RANDOLPH CHESTER
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"Why shouldn't a man be willing to recommend a tobacco which gives as cool, sweet and satisfying a smoke as Tuxedo?"



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famous illustrator
"Fill my pipe with Tuxedo and I'm content. You can't beat Tuxedo for mildness and purity."

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Tuxedo is the Mildest, Sweetest, Most Pleasant Smoke in the World, Because—

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Tuxedo was born in 1904. Its first imitator appeared two years later. Since then a host of imitations have been born and are clamoring for your patronage.

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If you are not a pipe smoker, you are denying yourself the greatest smoking pleasure known to man. One week of Tuxedo will give you more enjoyment than you have ever had—and at the end of the week your nerves will be better and your general health will have improved. *Try Tuxedo this week!*

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Convenient pouch, *inner-lined* with moisture-proof paper - - **5c**
In Tin Humidors, 40c and 80c

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Send us 2c in stamps for postage and we will mail you prepaid a souvenir tin of TUXEDO tobacco to any point in the United States. **FREE**

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"My dear, you're far too pretty to be stuffed away in my sewing room. You're worth a lot more to me out here than in there. How'd you like to be a model?"

"A model?" Maryla echoed, feebly.

"Yes, a mannikin if you prefer. You just sit around here like those other lazy hussies."—he indicated a number of languorous countesses dawdling about. "When a customer comes in you put on the gowns I tell you to, and simply walk up and down and show them off. Then some fat old cow thinks she'll look as well in it as you do. And we make a sale. How does that strike you? What?"

It struck Maryla as a gift from heaven. To spend her days putting on costumes like the woven dreams she saw about her, and to go sauntering back and forth in them for a few hours a day, and to earn far more so, than by pedaling the sewing machine up an eternal hillside—this was heaven already.

She accepted and promised to report for duty the next morning.

Mr. Dutilh had done a double stroke of policy. He had secured for himself a needed employee and he had secured the rapturous gratitude of Muriel Schuyler.

Muriel sent Maryla home in a taxicab, paying the driver in advance what he liberally estimated as the clock-distance.

She went to the yacht to pacify her father, serene in the consciousness that she had done a good day's work. She could not have dreamed into what a whirlpool she had led the feet of Maryla.

V

WHILE Muriel was transplanting Maryla to Dutilh's garden, her father was busy on his own account, and he executed a master-stroke with the aid of the telephone.

Muriel reached the yacht as she promised, and apologized for her unfilial behavior, blaming it on a higher duty. Jacob accepted the overtures, and peace was concluded. After the hot and eager day, the wind on the water was a benediction and the sight of the bay at home with its flock of yachts gliding or at rest was blessed.

But when the anchor splashed, there was no preparation for going ashore. Instead, a launch put off from the dock and conveyed aboard Muriel's mother and her maid, and Muriel's maid, and Jacob's man, and a deal of baggage.

"What's the meaning of all this?" said Muriel.

"We're going on a little cruise, my child," said Jacob with an odious joviality.

"But I have an engagement ashore—I have stacks of engagements."

"They'll wait."

"How long?"

"Oh, we'll be back in a few weeks."

Her wild protests only evoked the hilarious laughter of her father and mother, who clung together like two fat pirates, shaken and shaking each other with unmannerly glee.

Muriel used all her weapons on her father: threats, prayers, tears, cajolings, but all in vain. If he had been vulnerable, her mother was not. She used all those weapons herself too much to yield to them.

Beaten at every point, Muriel meekly pleaded:

"May I send a wireless or two at least?"

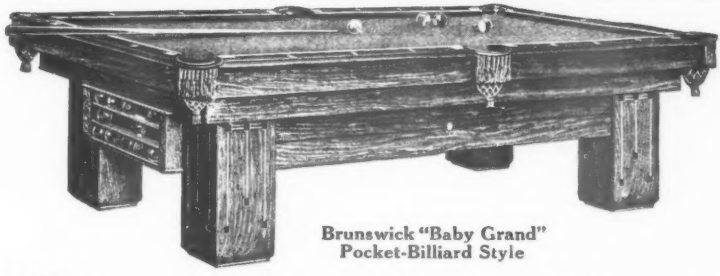
"You will send no wireless."

Muriel ordinarily could revel in a joke on herself, but the humor of being kidnaped by her own parents did not amuse her. It left too many serious interests too horribly involved. But she could not swim so far as the already receding shore.

VI

PERRY MERITHEW waited all evening at the Yacht Club for his dance with Muriel. His zealous anticipations sickened with delay. He did not dance with Pet Bettany or her mother, though they hovered in the offing like a couple of sinister submarines. He was afraid of them and wanted to take counsel with Muriel against them.

But Muriel did not come. At length he ventured to telephone her house, only to receive the baffling word that she had gone on a long cruise and had left no message for Mr. Merithew.



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Perry was frantic with humiliation. When Pet Bettany sauntered up to him, and purred: "Well, old top, have you thought it over?" he snapped at her: "Yes, and you can go as far as you like. In the words of the Duke of Wellington, when another little blackmailer bothered him, 'You can publish and be damned!' "

Then he left Pet without the courtesy of a good-night. He left her in a quandary. Blackmail is like a dueling pistol with only one bullet. Once the trigger is pulled, the menace is gone. Pet must withhold fire till the right moment.

The next day, Perry received a telephone "S. O. S." from Aphra Shaler.

They had quarreled. Perry under the spell of the remembered dance with Muriel, and the fantastic emotions of decency she had inspired him with, followed by the fantastic emotions of disgust, had neglected Aphra—shamefully, she said.

She had been afraid to go out lest he call for her, and the monotony of her existence annoyed her insufferably. Finally she summoned him to her Paphian shrine and wept before him, till he was convinced that he was a heartless monster. To atone for his neglect and to achieve a little nepenthe he invited her to visit Atlantic City. She wailed that she had nothing to wear.

He invited her to come with him to Dutilh's and see if there were anything fit for her loveliness. Aphra's tears dried with almost audible immediateness.

Mr. Dutilh greeted her with the homage due her magician's genius for extracting whole trousseaux from a foolish man's pocketbook. Perry had planned to buy her one gown, and let Dutilh wait for his money.

Aphra reveled in the new styles as if they were made of catnip. Her hair was at that time in its auburn phase, and while Aphra was in a dressing room trying on a Cubist insanity from Paris, Dutilh selected another for her inspection and selected Maryla to march forward in it, since she was nearer the complexion of Aphra than any of his other walking ladies.

And so Maryla arrived within the ken of Perry Merithew. With her arms extended and her fingers posed according to the formula, the tip of the thumb touching the tip of the second finger affectedly, she went undulantly up and down.

Perry had begun to realize that he was being taken in. He had volunteered Aphra one new gown as a peace offering. He had already been "run up the pole" for three; Aphra was putting on another, and here was still one more walking past him.

His enthusiasm for Aphra suffered an abrupt chill. He looked upon Maryla with resentful eyes that suddenly wakened to her dreamy beauty. Her hair and her general hue reminded him of Muriel, for all their differences. She and her gown seemed to have been created together. She pleased his artistic soul completely.

Seeing that Dutilh was at a distance hunting for further wares to tempt Aphra, he beckoned Maryla closer, and murmured in his most amiable tone:

"Do you know, my dear young lady, that you are as pretty as can be? Yes, sir, you're the prettiest thing I've seen in ages."

"Why, thenk you!" said Maryla with the deference proper to an important customer and with a ferocious heart-fluttering on her account.

"What do you think of that gown you have on?"

"I love it," said Maryla, as a loyal saleswoman must, and with a deep personal conviction.

"I'll buy it for you, if you'll wear it."

"I—I don't understend," Maryla whispered, feeling swoony.

"I'll explain myself later," he said. Neither of them had noticed that Aphra had emerged from concealment, blatant in a new evening gown, which Dutilh was pinning up here and letting down there.

"How do you like this, dearie?" Aphra had said. She said it twice before either Perry or Maryla realized that she had spoken.

The next installment of *"Empty Pockets,"* will be in the December Red Book, on the news-stands November 23rd.